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# **The Theology of Christ's Teaching**



THE  
THEOLOGY OF CHRIST'S  
TEACHING

BY THE REV.

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY THE REV.

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTICE

BY THE REV. PROFESSOR JAMES ORR, D.D.

It is a small thing to say of the late Principal King that those who knew him best loved him most. They admired him for his gifts of mind and heart; they marvelled exceedingly at the amount and quality of the work he was enabled to perform; they felt rebuked in view of the ceaseless and untiring energy he threw into that work. They recognised a nobility and unselfishness in his character and aims which lifted him out of the rank of common men, and made his career of quiet but concentrated usefulness at once an example and an inspiration to them.


It was the privilege of the present writer to know Dr. King with some intimacy in his later years, but while still in the full stream of his activity and influence. He had repeated opportunities of intercourse with him in public and private; enjoyed for a few peaceful weeks the hospitality of his home at Winnipeg, and saw him amidst the sanctities of domestic life; lectured for him in his College, and could observe the workings of that institution, and the part Dr. King himself bore in its labours; interchanged thought with him on most theological, religious, and educational questions, as on others of

more general interest ; and witnessed without surprise the universal respect in which he was held in the Church and the community. When, therefore, the request was made by those whose desires he was bound to respect to pen a few pages of introduction to this volume, he did not feel at liberty to refuse a service, which, in any case, enables him to pay a humble personal tribute to one for whom he entertained so sincere a regard.

It is not necessary to say much of the events of Principal King's personal history. He was born at Yetholm in Roxburghshire, on the Scottish borders, on 29th May, 1829 ; was educated at Edinburgh University, under such distinguished professors as Sir Wm. Hamilton and John Wilson (" Christopher North ") ; thence, after an interval spent in Germany, passed to the Divinity Hall of the United Presbyterian Church, where he completed his preparation for the ministry. In Germany, at Halle, he studied under Julius Müller, Tholuck, and the saintly Neander, who then adorned that University, receiving from them indelible impressions, and acquiring a familiarity with the German tongue which enabled him subsequently, not only to teach, but even to preach in that language. In Scotland, one of his theological professors was Dr. John Brown, the influence of whose exegetical method of treating doctrinal subjects may easily be detected in the present volume. In 1856 he took the degree of M.A. at the University

of Edinburgh; and in the same year, under the auspices of the Colonial Committee of his Church, set out for Canada, by a wise instinct, as events have proved, choosing that as the scene of his future labours. In light of all that has happened, there is no impiety in seeing in his transference to this new soil the direct guidance of Providence.

Always large in his plans, and with an eye on the future rather than the present, Dr. King's first year was voluntarily spent in surveying the possibilities of the country, and forwarding the work of Church extension. Then he became minister, first of the congregation of Columbus and Brooklyn, Ontario, and afterwards, in 1863, of Gould Street (now St. James's Square) Church, in Toronto. His memory in the latter city will long be green. The congregation to which he came had been not long before at the point of extinction; but under his ministry it grew to be one of the most prosperous and enterprising in the Canadian Church. During his ministry in his earlier charge the union was effected (in 1861) of the United Presbyterian Church with the Presbyterian Church of Canada—a movement to which he gave his hearty support. In 1873 took place his marriage with Miss Janet M. Skinner, who, with her sister, carried on a high-class school for ladies in Toronto, and no union, by universal testimony, could have been more beautiful or happy during the too brief period that it lasted—till 1886. In 1882, Knox



College, Toronto, which had received the power of conferring theological degrees, made its first use of its power in bestowing on him the degree of D.D.

The real work of Dr. King's life, however, lay yet before him. The College of Manitoba, in Winnipeg, had incurred heavy debt in building at a time of temporary inflation in the city, and, now that collapse had come, was in dire financial straits. In these depressing circumstances, in 1883 (the same year in which he was its Moderator), the General Assembly invited Dr. King to accept the position of first Principal and Professor of Theology in the College. After careful examination on the spot, Dr. King undertook the responsibility, and nobly devoted himself to his arduous task. His success was complete. Under his care the College speedily revived, and soon took rank as one of the foremost educational institutions of the Church in Canada. His marvellous energy not only enabled him in the course of a few years to clear away the existing debt (of some 40,000 dollars, or £8,000), but impelled him to undertake extensive enlargements and improvements at a cost of 45,000 dollars (£9,000); yet at the time of his death the credit balance was on the right side, and the College was possessed of splendid buildings, adequately equipped, with invested endowments of over 60,000 dollars (£12,000). As of Augustus and Rome, it might be said of Dr. King and his College: "He found it brick, and left it marble".

Dr. King's indomitable perseverance and remarkable administrative capacity gave equal success to his plans in other directions. A born teacher, he threw himself into the work of instruction to a degree almost beyond his strength. Besides his regular duties and multifarious engagements, he conducted a class in German (possibly others), and gave in successive years courses of lectures to the ladies of Winnipeg on Biblical Theology, Moral Philosophy, and Tennyson's "In Memoriam," his favourite poem. These lectures on Tennyson have since been published. To aid students engaged in mission work, he instituted summer sessions, and organised courses of instruction for which lecturers were brought from afar—even from across the Atlantic. He regularly taught a Sabbath morning Bible Class, took the deepest interest in Home and Foreign Missions, was a trusted counsellor in all departments of the Church's work, contributed to the magazines and reviews—in a word, was unceasingly and absorbingly busy. His self-sacrificing devotedness was only equalled by the humbleness and generosity of his Christian character.


A life so strenuous could not but at some point suddenly burn itself out; the wonder is that the central fire continued to glow so long. In 1886 a heavy blow fell on Dr. King in the loss of his wife; soon after a second blow in the death of his son, a bright boy of nine years old, after a short illness in his absence, completely prostrated him. Recovery

brought with it a new period of service, deepened sympathies, and seemingly redoubled labours. In 1898 he visited Scotland in search of a professor, whom he at length found in the Rev. T. B. Kilpatrick, D.D., of Aberdeen. Yet the appointment was scarcely made ere he was finally stricken down. An attack of pneumonia, following upon influenza, brought him to the gates of death, and, though there was a marvellous rally, and a month ensued of brave fight for life, the disease had fastened too surely on an enfeebled frame to be successfully combated, and on 5th March, 1899, he passed peacefully away, amidst the tears of his loved ones, the mourning of his College and Church, and the profound and tender regrets of his whole city and district.

It will be seen even from this brief sketch that the qualities which met in Dr. King formed a combination which—rarely found in men of more brilliant and original gifts—may without exaggeration be called a species of genius. Seldom has there been seen a man more possessed in all his labours with the spirit—“this one thing I do”. With a deep religious faith, which illuminated, sustained and sanctified all his powers, and furnished the impelling motives of his life, he united a wide range of knowledge and culture, and large and liberal human interests. He loved nature, he loved literature, above all he loved men. His power of communicating instruction, as every one must have felt who came in contact with

him, was remarkable. His ordinary lectures, as this volume shows, were prepared with great care, and were clear, methodical and precise in statement. He could and did teach in many departments besides theology. The writer recalls the zest with which he conducted his class in German on Goethe's *Faust*, and the animated spectacle presented by the large and intently interested assemblage of ladies to whom, note-books in hand, he expounded from Dr. Calderwood's *Handbook* the doctrines of "Evolutionary Utilitarianism"—of course, to proceed to refute them! He was well versed in mental and moral science, and, as the glow on his own face evinced while teaching, took special delight in explaining it. He had all his life great power with students, and keen interest in them. His church at Toronto was the students' favourite resort, and at Winnipeg the inmates of the Colleges loved and trusted not less than they honoured and revered him.

One could not be in Dr. King's company long without perceiving that a largeness of mind and spirit of enterprise characterised him in whatever he did. He did not care for simply treading the beaten tracks; moving in ruts that others had worn for him. There was an element of idealism in him (one often caught it in the depths of the look of his eye, keen, but beneath tender) that asked for space, for outlook, for new horizons, for enlarging tasks. It was not the easy but the difficult parts of duty he coveted.





One sees this trait through all his life. As a student, he was not content with the wells of his own land ; he must drink at the newer fountains opened in Germany. He might have settled in honour and usefulness at home ; his mind turned to Canada, with its boundless possibilities of expansion. That vast country he regarded, not as a field for personal success, but in the light of its missionary and educational needs. It was not wealthy and comfortable posts that tempted him, but a congregation at its lowest ebb, as in Toronto, or a College on the rocks of financial ruin, as at Manitoba. His business was not to drink the sweet, but to turn into sweetness the bitters of others. A line of duty, no doubt, in which he found the deepest sweetness of all ; for it is he who loses his life for the Kingdom of God that alone truly finds it.

Combined with this largeness of outlook and spirit of enterprise in Dr. King, however, there were other qualities which formed the necessary balance of this. More conspicuous, perhaps, than any other features in his character were his singular sagacity in forming his plans, his tenacity in adhering to them, and his courage, perseverance and unflinching resolution in their execution. There was nothing rash or Quixotic in Dr. King's composition ; on the contrary, a strong dash of his native Scotch prudence and caution. His plans were large and liberal ; he had the statesman's gift of perceiving that the truest wisdom and surest

road to success lie, not in narrow and pettifogging counsels, but in large and liberal devisings ; not in timidity, but in boldness ; not in distrust of men, but in faith in them. But his plans were likewise always well laid, and, therefore, seldom failed of success. Together with the perception of ends, he had the sound natural judgment that perceived the connection of means with ends ; with his extensive projects he united the good sense, farsightedness, resourcefulness, which secured that his schemes were always on a sound business footing ; his plans were not conceived hastily, or in the vague, or with the unpractical enthusiasm of the dreamer, but were thought out in minute detail, and calculated with an exactness which the event justified. Illustrations of this combined largeness of view and sound business faculty might easily be given. At Toronto, for example, it is noted that he kept his eye on signs of progress in every part of the city, and, with the assistance of one or two members of his congregation, was in the habit of buying a lot in any locality in which there seemed an indication that a church might in the near future be judiciously planted. If the expectations formed were not realised the lot was again sold, but any advance in price was applied to further the end in view. In his own giving Dr. King set a notable pattern of liberality, and was not afraid to encounter risks if important advantages were to be obtained.

For Dr. King, accordingly, to take up a scheme

was of itself to inspire confidence in it. Once the plan was adopted nothing could exceed his determination and tenacity of purpose in the prosecution of it. Obstacles were no deterrent. He knew his own mind, and no thought of personal trouble or sacrifice was allowed to turn him aside till the goal was reached. His was faith of the kind that removes mountains ; and his career might be studied as a valuable commentary on that promise of the Lord.

What Dr. King was as a theologian the present volume on *The Theology of Christ's Teaching* will suffice to show. Its successive chapters, which embody his class lectures, exhibit, as well as anything could, the style and method of his teaching. This is not the place for any general criticism of their contents. It will be seen that their basis is exegetical ; that they embrace the results of prolonged and minute study of Christ's teaching on all the great themes of theology ; that they are models of perspicuous and methodical exposition of their several topics ; while, at the same time, they are severely didactic in character, and make no attempt at literary or rhetorical ornament. It will be seen also that the general lines of the exposition are what would be called conservative. Dr. King stood in "the old paths," yet not without indications of the modernity of spirit which could not but characterise one like himself, who had studied abroad and knew something of what modern thought meant. His very choice of a subject in these lectures

is to a certain extent an evidence of his modernness. He had the keenness to perceive, what all indications corroborate, that it is about the thoughts and words of Christ Himself that the battles of theology in this new age will have to be fought. He concentrates his energy, therefore, not on book-theology, or even on the Apostolic doctrines, but directly on what the Lord Himself is reported in the Gospels to have said and taught. His treatment is full and painstaking, and results in bringing out the harmony of Christ's teaching with the main doctrines of the Apostolic Gospel. In two respects, probably, exception will be taken to his method. It will be urged that his attitude to the Old Testament Scriptures is untouched by recent critical discussions; and he will be challenged for blending together in his exposition the teaching of the Synoptical Gospels with that of the Fourth Gospel, which, it will be held, is of a peculiar character, and demands separate treatment. In both respects it may be admitted that Dr. King's work represents an older stage of theological and critical discussion than that now in vogue. But even with this disadvantage its substantial merits probably remain unaffected. That Dr. King had an open mind on these newer questions might be shown in many ways; for example, by his inviting Professor G. A. Smith, who represents the modern school, to deliver one of his Summer Courses at Winnipeg. The observant reader will observe also


that, on points of exegesis, Dr. King maintains a singularly unfettered mind, and, as in his discussion of the bearings of the sayings in John vi. on the doctrine of election, or of the evidential character of miracles, frequently takes what may be called the "modern" view. The book will be valuable to not a few as a revelation of the many-sidedness of the Saviour's teaching, and will be specially acceptable to former students of Dr. King, whose memories of a revered instructor will by its means be vividly revived.

The feeling entertained regarding Dr. King in the circles immediately around him could hardly be better expressed than in the following lines from the "Memorial Number" of the *Manitoba College Journal*, on the occasion of his death. The allusion will be recognised as to his lectures on "In Memoriam".

Not worthier was the Friend whose death  
    Wrung from the Poet of our Age  
    Memoriam's immortal page—  
Not nobler, nor of purer faith—

Than he, who late that page did con  
    That we with him its sweet might share,  
    And learn its meaning, subtle, rare,  
And note the tears that in it shone.

And tho' less gifted pens essay  
    To tell his worth, Thou know'st, O God,  
    Our tears, that fall upon the sod,  
Are not less bitter than were they !





## INTRODUCTION

THEOLOGY in its more restricted signification is the doctrine regarding God, His nature and perfections. It is used here in its wider and more common sense, as embracing not only the doctrine of God as such, but also the aggregate of those truths which set forth the relations of God to man, and His whole action in restoring man to a life of fellowship with Himself. Ethical truths even, so far from being excluded, attain on their religious side to a place of first importance in the science.

By Biblical theology is to be understood the exhibition of these truths, as they are found in Scripture, in the historical and doctrinal connections obtaining there, and not in those relations of co-ordination and interdependence in which they go to form a system of doctrine. While it thus differs from systematic theology, it differs not in respect of content, but in respect of form only. Both embrace or should embrace substantially the same truths ; but in systematic theology the effort is made, whether successful or not, to reduce these truths to unity, to combine them into a consistent and harmonious

whole. In Biblical theology they are presented either independently or simply in the relations to each other, and to historical circumstances, in which they are found in the word of God. It is not necessary to claim an absolute superiority for the one above the other. Each mode of exhibiting Divine truth has its respective advantages. Biblical theology has this in its favour, that each truth is naturally presented in its entirety, in its proper individuality, and without the temptation, so often found to be irresistible by the dogmatic theologian, either to stretch it on the one hand, or to compress it on the other, so as to make it fit into the system.

The task before us, however, is one still more limited. The subject to be treated is not simply Biblical theology as distinguished from systematic ; it is Biblical theology only as embraced in the personal teachings of Jesus Christ. The whole materials for it accordingly are to be found in those statements recorded in the gospels respecting God and Divine things which the Saviour made during His earthly life and in His own proper person. In handling this subject, the course taken will be at once to isolate and to group these statements and to relate them in the manner best fitted to bring to light their mutual connections.

Naturally the field of survey must embrace all the four gospels. No doubt there are very strik-

ing differences between the synoptical gospels and that of the fourth Evangelist ; but their essential agreement is at least as wonderful as their obvious diversity. It is assumed here that both contain genuine utterances of Christ ; and having had, as is evident, very distinct origins, the statements in the one may be employed, as they have been by Wendt in his very able and exhaustive work, to corroborate and to throw light upon those in the other. For our present purpose, we prefer to look at the four gospels as a whole.

The isolation of the personal teachings of Christ is not to be regarded as necessarily implying that other portions of Scripture are less authoritative. Whatever opinion may be entertained on this point, it will be universally admitted that in the wide domain of spiritual truth the person of the Lord is central, His authority is direct and immediate. The Old Testament has authority for us largely because He endorsed it ; the Epistles, because written by those to whom He promised His spirit to lead them into all truth. In going to the personal teachings of the Saviour, therefore, we are going to that which constitutes, if not the exclusive yet the ultimate basis of authority in regard to things Divine and Spiritual. In listening to His words, in waiting by His side, we wait by the very fountain of truth, we listen to Him who is "the truth".

A separate treatment of the sayings of our Lord,



such as is proposed, is still further recommended, on the one hand, by the consideration that it narrows the limits of the field of inquiry and thus renders possible a more minute and exhaustive survey of that which it embraces ; and on the other, by the fact that it enables us all the better to see, both to what an extent the teaching of the New Testament leans upon that of the Old, and also how really the germs at least of all the doctrines unfolded by the Apostles are found in the personal teachings of their Master.

Taking a general view of the Saviour's teachings, they may be divided under three classes, the Theological, the Ethical and the Eschatological. It is proposed to consider them in this order. Attention, however, is solicited first to His teaching on two subjects of a more general or introductory character, and which do not come properly under any of the heads named : The Old Testament Scriptures, and The Place and Value of Miracles.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES.

THE Old Testament Scriptures must have been in the Saviour's hands from childhood, almost certainly in much the same form as we now possess them. The most cursory survey of the passages, in which reference is made by Him to these writings, attests not only His perfect familiarity with their contents, but evidences also the large degree in which these contents entered into and influenced His human thought ; a degree indeed that must be regarded as nothing less than marvellous in view of His Divine personality. One may say, that the statements of fact and of doctrine contained in these Scriptures form, if not the necessary, yet certainly the actual presupposition of the teachings of our Lord, by whom they are throughout honoured. Even when He transcends the teachings of the law and the prophets, as He from time to time does, He does not so much break with them, as He brings to light what has been all along their underlying principle, disengaging it from temporary obscurations and traditional glosses. But to come to particulars :—

1. He accepts their narratives when He has occasion to refer to them as historically true ; such narratives as those of the creation of man (Matt. xix. 4, 5 ; comp. Gen. i. 27 ; v. 2), of the flood (Matt. xxiv. 37-39 ; comp. Gen. vi. and vii.), of the appearances of God to Abraham (Matt. xxii. 31 ; comp. Exod. iii. 6, 16), of the destruction of the cities of the plain (Matt. xi. 23 ; comp. Gen. xix.), and of other

occurrences recorded in the earlier chapters of Scripture. It will be seen that He gives no countenance to the mythical or legendary view taken by some of these narratives. On the contrary, the use which He makes of two of them, the first and the third, to ground doctrine and of the other two to accentuate and enforce warning is, when closely viewed, inconsistent with anything short of strict historical character in the narratives so used. The foundation given to the doctrine is illusive, and the warnings uttered lose much of their force, if the events referred to are not regarded as authentic or historically true. It should be evident to every fair mind that the Saviour did so regard them, and, if so, the importance of the fact will not be measured by the number of those early Old Testament narratives which He had occasion to employ, and which he stamps with His endorsation.

2. He asserts their authority. He does not, perhaps, explicitly and formally teach their inspiration, unless indeed we generalise, as we seem almost warranted in doing, one quite direct statement to this effect, "David himself said in the Holy Spirit, the Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on My right hand" (Mark xii. 36, R.V.); similarly, "How then dost David in the Spirit call Him Lord" (Matt. xxii. 43, R.V.). He does certainly apply freely to the contents of Scripture forms of expression which can mean nothing less than that they are God-given. That which they enjoin is set in antithesis to the commandments of men and designated "the commandments of God" (Matt. xxv. iii.; Mark vii. 7). The assurance made to Abraham, which it is so easy for the thought of our day to invest with a legendary character, is characterised as "that which was spoken unto you by God" (Matt. xxii. 31). It is true these expressions are not universal or even general in their

character ; they relate to definite and particular passages in Scripture, and it would be possible, therefore, so far as their testimony is concerned, to maintain that other passages may be regarded as purely human, without coming into direct conflict with the testimony of Christ therein. But while logically possible, such a position would certainly be out of harmony with the general tenor of the Saviour's testimony. In any case the inspiration of Old Testament Scripture is implied in the authority with which, as will be seen, He throughout invests it.

This authority is asserted by the Saviour, first, in relation to questions of doctrine.

The following examples occur : (a) In connection with the question of divorce and the nature of the marriage relationship as involved therein. Christ settled the point by an appeal to Scripture, and to the account therein given of the facts connected with man's origin : "He answered and said unto them, Have ye not read that He which made them at the beginning, made them male and female (Gen. i. 27), and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh" (Gen. ii. 24 ; Matt. xix. 4 ; Mark x. 3-8). (β) In connection with the question of the resurrection from the dead. This truth likewise He establishes or at least supports on the basis of a statement contained in Exodus iii. 6, 16. "But as touching the resurrection of the dead, Have ye not read that which was spoken by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matt. xxii. 31, 32 ; Mark xii. 26, 27 ; Luke xx. 37, 38). We are not now concerned with the nature of the proof which the Saviour leads of the doctrine of the



resurrection in this passage. We are not called under this head to determine the point on which His argument turns. We are called only to take account of the source from which it is drawn, as evidencing the authority which the statements of Old Testament Scripture had for His mind. (γ) In connection with the Lordship which belongs to the Messiah. Here again He makes His appeal to Scripture. "How then doth David in the Spirit call Him Lord?" (Matt. xxii. 43, R.V. ; comp. Ps. cx. 1); the assumption obviously being that the simple statement of the Psalmist was decisive of the fact of the lordship here asserted, as of all other matters on which the Spirit speaking through Him had uttered His testimony.

The authoritative character of Old Testament Scripture is asserted, second, in relation to questions of duty.

To the thrice repeated temptation of the devil, the answer on each occasion is, "It is written" (Matt. iv. 4, 7-10), showing that for Him on the matters to which they related, these Scriptures were absolutely decisive of duty. There is something even more striking in this, than in the establishment of points of doctrine by an appeal to them, for it is conceivable that in the latter case His appeal to the Scriptures was prompted by the consideration that they supplied a standard accepted by those whom He was addressing, but when we find Him, if not exactly determining His own course of action at a most critical period by their utterances, yet at least justifying by them His resistance to the temptations to which He was subjected, using them to bring to light the real character of these temptations, we cannot fail to recognise the high authority in matters of duty with which He invests them. Again, when the question was put to Him by one, "Master, what shall I do

to inherit eternal life?" His immediate reply was, "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" (Luke x. 26); and so when taking a course strangely unlike His general procedure, He drove the traffickers out of the temple, He justified His conduct by an appeal to Scripture. "My house shall be called a house of prayer (Isa. lvi. 7), but ye have made it a den of thieves" (Matt. xxi. 13; Mark xi. 17; Luke xix. 46).

Thus questions of duty as of doctrine are with Christ determined by direct reference to the teachings of Scripture thereanent. The testimony borne in this way to the authoritative character of these teachings is, indeed, of the implied rather than of the direct kind, but it is not on that account the less strong and unmistakable; perhaps it is only the more strong. With the Great Teacher, the Divine authority of the Old Testament, like the existence of God, is a truth everywhere assumed, and not one requiring to be established by argument, scarcely needing even to be directly asserted. And yet direct assertions of this truth are not altogether wanting in the gospels. Thus when vindicating Himself from the charge of blasphemy in claiming to be the Son of God, He said after quoting the words of Scripture in Psalm lxxxii. 6, "The Scripture cannot be broken" (John x. 35), that is, cannot be loosed or dissolved, deprived of authority, for such is the proper force of the term employed, *λυθῆναι* (comp. Matt. xxvi. 54, 56; Mark xiv. 49; Luke xxii. 37). But generally speaking, the work of Christ in relation to Old Testament Scripture is, on its basis as a Divine revelation, to unfold its significance, to widen its compass, to disengage it of what was merely provisional and temporary, and to apply it to the guidance and the ennoblement of human life.

The question may naturally be asked whether the authority with which the Saviour invests Old Testament Scripture in matters of doctrine and of duty extends also to matters of fact. An increasing number in our day seem disposed to call this in question, and thus to limit the authority of these Scriptures to their purely spiritual and ethical teachings. This is only what we might expect in the case of those who, like Bishop Moorehouse in his recent work on *The Teaching of Christ*, would restrict in a similar way the authority of the Saviour's own words; and who, on the basis of a certain view of the kenosis, do not think it necessary to ascribe to Him, in fact are precluded from ascribing to Him, any knowledge of the facts of science and history or even of the authorship of the sacred books beyond that possessed by any intelligent Jew of His day. We must content ourselves with a passing reference to this view, according to which, in the Incarnation, the Saviour laid aside, "emptied Himself" of, the transitive attributes of Deity, such as omnipotence and omniscience: we cannot fully discuss it. While held by many scholars, some of whom are at least as eminent for their piety as their scholarship, it cannot be said as yet to have gained anything like universal acceptance. If it removes some difficulties, rendering, for example, the Saviour's possession of a normal human development and experience more intelligible, it raises others, almost more formidable. It is difficult to reconcile it with the unchangeableness which is one of the distinctive attributes of the Divine nature, and it appears to be in direct variance with all those statements of Christ in which expression is given to His consciousness of a prior existence of glory. Even if it does not overthrow the true Godhead of the Incarnate Word—the names of some who

hold it, as Julius Müller, Kalmes, Luthardt, would seem to forbid this supposition—it certainly gives to it a somewhat different character, and, in any case, it has a very doubtful basis in a single verse, or rather a single word, of Scripture.

But to return to the point more immediately before us : it may be admitted that the main thing to be secured is authoritative utterance in the realm of the divine and the spiritual. It is certainly in all the instances above adduced a spiritual truth or an ethical obligation which the Saviour employs the declarations of Old Testament Scripture to establish. But it is only necessary to look somewhat carefully into one of these instances, that in which He deals with the question of marriage and divorce, to see how closely doctrine and fact are intertwined. The law of marriage as laid down by Christ is based on the Mosaic account of the Creation. This is only one instance of the close connection which obtains between fact and doctrine. It has yet to be shown how we can preserve the one if we surrender the other ; how we can vindicate the truth and divine authority of the doctrine while allowing the fact or even the possibility of error in the history. The effort to do this will no doubt continue to be made in more quarters than one, and it may be too much to affirm in advance that its success is impossible, but it may at least be said, that the presumptuous are not in its favour.

3. He affirms their instructive character. Speaking to those who doubted, or rather who denied the possibility of the resurrection, He said, " We do err, not knowing the Scriptures " (Matt. xxii. 29 ; Mark xii. 24). Defending His disciples against the charge of Sabbath breaking, He did not only point to the work prescribed by the law to the

priests in the temple (Matt. xii. 5), He also cited the word in the prophets, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice" (Matt. xii. 7; comp. Hos. vi. 6). Addressing those who were indignant at the honours paid Him on the occasion of His last entrance to Jerusalem, He said, quoting the eighth Psalm, "Have you never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise" (Matt. xxi. 16).

He recognises their instructive character, very specially and in numerous instances in relation to Himself. This recognition comes before us in its most general form in John v. 39, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me". The verb (*ἐπευνάτε*) may be either imperative or indicative. In the Authorised Version it is taken as the former; in the Revised Version as the latter. In relation to the point under discussion, it is unimportant whether it is the one or the other. But the rendering of the Revised Version, which is strongly supported by several considerations—among others, by the connection in which it stands, where we have a succession of indicatives; by the reason assigned, which does not appear to be relevant to a precept; and by the well-known feature in Jewish character, a sort of presumptuous trust in the mere letter of Old Testament Scripture—lends greatly additional point to the Saviour's statement, which then amounts to this, "Ye idolise the book and ye reject Him, the living Word, of whom it speaks and to whom it bears witness". It only adds, as Westcott has remarked, to the pathos of the words, that the successive clauses, while sharply antithetical, are united not by an adversative but by the simplest connective particle. "Ye search the Scriptures . . . and" (not but or yet) "they testify of Me and ye will not come unto Me". In any case there is contained in

them the declaration by the Saviour that Old Testament Scripture testifies, and, as would seem to be implied, not in an occasional or exceptional way, of the Christ, the Messiah who was to come.

This is almost certainly the force also of the statement in the thirty-seventh verse of the same chapter, "And the Father which sent Me, He hath borne witness of Me" (R.V.). In the connection in which it stands, the witness here cannot be well understood as other than that contained in Old Testament Scripture, which is thus in one and the same sentence ascribed to God as its author and referred to Christ as its subject.

In particular, He affirms their instructive character, first, in relation to the career of suffering through which the promised Messiah was to pass, "How it is written of the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things and be set at nought" (Mark ix. 12), and second, in relation to His future triumph and glory, "Did ye never read in the Scriptures (Ps. cxviii. 22), The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner" (Matt. xxi. 42). He does this not in one or two instances, but in instances many times repeated, showing us how large and how important a place these prophetic intimations of suffering and of glory occupied in His mind in connection with that growth in knowledge which would not only seem to be necessary to the reality and completeness of His humanity, but which is directly affirmed in Luke ii. 52. In so speaking, we would be very far from limiting the source of the Saviour's knowledge of the course before Him to the contents of Scripture, wonderfully full and important though these were. Such statements as those found in Matthew xi. 27; John ii. 11; v. 20; xii. 49, point to His possession of

a spiritual knowledge of truth, altogether distinct from that coming through the written word. Whatever its character, however, it was not inconsistent with the exercise of a deep and large influence on His mind by the contents of that word. Here therefore is no case of a complete break of the new with the old. On the contrary the new grows out of the old, while it immeasurably transcends it. Possessing a knowledge of God, such as no prophet of the olden time had reached, the Saviour does not the less honour Scripture. He is only the better able to enter into its deep significance and to recognise its changeless verities.

We hear much in our day of the comparative worthlessness of external testimony in spiritual matters, of its incapacity to convey or even to attest religious truth. It is characteristic of not a little of modern thought to attach pre-eminent and indeed almost exclusive importance to the light within ; the reason which is common to the race. A different impression altogether is conveyed by the attitude which the Saviour maintains in relation to Old Testament Scripture. For Him even it is instructive ; it is regulative both of thought and action.

4. He claims for them an element of strict prediction. Several of the texts already quoted involve this claim. Naturally it is in relation to Himself and His own work that He is mainly led to signalise this feature of Old Testament Scripture. Thus in the very commencement of His ministry, if we follow the chronology of Luke, He quoted Isaiah lxi. 1 : "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor, He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the

Lord," and then added, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke iv. 21). Thus according to the view taken of them by the Saviour, the words of the prophet were nothing less than predictive. His ministry is their actual fulfilment. Further on we find Him quoting the words of the same prophet, as being fulfilled under His eye. "It is written . . . they shall all be taught of God" (John vi. 45 ; comp. Isa. liv. 13). His experience of causeless hatred and contumely is only in keeping with what has been said in Psalm xxxv., nay, it "cometh to pass, that the word may be fulfilled which is written in their law, They hated Me without a cause" (John xv. 25). And He declares that in the Jews of His age "is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand" (Matt. xiii. 14 ; Mark iv. 12 ; Luke viii. 10 ; comp. Isa. vi. 9).

But it is in the circumstances connected with the close of His ministry and of His life that the predictive element in the Old Testament Scriptures is most fully brought into view, and finds its most striking fulfilment, so far as the Saviour is concerned ; thus, in the scattering of the Apostles at His apprehension, characterised (Matt. xxvi. 31) as the fulfilment of what was written, "I will smite the Shepherd and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad" (Zech. xiii. 7), and so also in the accomplishment of His own death of violence and shame (Mark ix. 12 ; Luke xxiv. 46), and numerous other passages.

It is well known that the existence in Old Testament Scripture of anything which can be strictly termed prediction has been called in question by a numerous class. It is denied, as we might anticipate, by those who affirm the impossibility of miracles, prediction of the kind claimed being neither more nor less than a miracle of knowledge.



In view of the passages adduced, it would seem impossible to reconcile this denial with the teachings of Christ on the subject. It is perhaps possible to question, whether there are declarations in the Old Testament which on their own face, and in the light of subsequent events, can only be regarded as strictly predictive ; predictive in a sense implying the illumination of the prophet's mind by Him who sees the end from the beginning ; but it is beyond question that the Saviour recognised the existence of such prophetic announcements therein. It does not appear to be possible to reconcile their denial with His oft-recurring testimony. On His authority we may claim, we cannot but claim, the existence of an element of strict prediction in these writings ; prediction not vague and general but precise and definite and which He again and again declared " must be fulfilled " and fulfilled in Himself (Matt. xxvi. 54, 56 ; Mark xiv. 49 ; Luke xxii. 37). The Saviour's words in the last passage are peculiarly strong : " For I say unto you, that this which is written (Isa. liii. 12) must be fulfilled in Me, And He was reckoned with the transgressors : for that which concerneth Me hath fulfilment " (R.V.).

5. He protests against their replacement by tradition or by human glosses. The most striking statement here is : " And He said unto them, Full well do ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother ; and, He that speaketh evil of father or mother, let him die the death : but ye say, If a man shall say to his father or his mother, That wherewith thou mightest have been profited by me is Corban, that is to say, Given to God ; ye no longer suffer him to do aught for his father or his mother ; making void the word of God by your tradition, which ye have delivered :

and many such like things ye do" (Mark vii. 9-13). It is instructive to note what exactly the nature of the violation of Old Testament requirement was, against which the Saviour entered His protest. It consisted in the replacement of a moral obligation—that resting on children to support their parents, when such support was needed and when the children were in a position to render it—by a ritual or as it might seem a religious act, and yet just because it was made the excuse for neglecting such an obligation not really religious and not acceptable to God. The warning is not unneeded by the world still. The temptation still is, to neglect moral obligations and to seek to find a cover, if not a justification, for such neglect in more than ordinary attention to ritual or seemingly religious observances.


Thus far every statement of Christ has looked in the direction of the establishment in an absolute way of the authority of Old Testament Scripture. There are other statements, however, which have the appearance at least of invalidating or altering its requirements in part. The antithesis in which the Saviour sets His own teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, not simply to that of the traditional interpreters of the law, but in several instances to the letter at least of the law itself (Matt. v. 21, 27; comp. Exod. xx. 13, 14), the important modification which He makes on the Mosaic enactment respecting divorce (Mark x. 4, 5, 6; comp. Deut. xxiv. 1), the manner in which He deals with the permission of retaliation (Matt. v. 39; comp. Lev. xxiv. 20), His action in relation to the Sabbath law, vindicating the sanctity of the institution, but in the very act of doing so broadening its basis and doing away with the restrictive regulations and external penalties by which it was hedged

in (Mark ii. 27, 28; comp. Exod. xx. 8-11; xxxi. 14), and the virtual abolition of the whole Levitical code respecting ceremonial impurity by the enunciation of the principle, "There is nothing from without a man that entering into him can defile him" (Mark vii. 15). All this raises the question whether the principles already laid down on the subject exhibit the entire and exact attitude of the Saviour to the Old Testament, or whether they do not require to be qualified in some way or another.

Some (Neander, Bleek, Baur, Wendt and others) have maintained, on the ground of the teachings above adduced, that the Saviour took up an attitude of great freedom in relation to Old Testament requirement; that He set Himself to judge what in it "really corresponded to the true will of God and what was only an imperfect expression of that will," and to abrogate or to alter it accordingly. This position, however, unless very carefully guarded, is one which it would seem hopeless to reconcile, as with the general tenor of the Saviour's words, so specially with the explicit and solemn declaration made in the Sermon on the Mount: "Verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all things be accomplished" (Matt. v. 18, R.V.). Here is no hint of disappearance or abrogation of the law either in purpose or in effect: the very opposite. It is to remain imperishable, unimpaired, in its essential principles, in what may be termed its divine intention, if not in its detailed enactments. The declaration, indeed, is so directly and obviously at variance with the disparagement of the Old Testament, which some are of opinion is implied in the Saviour's teaching, that at least one eminent advocate of this view (Baur) endeavours to get

rid of the difficulty which the statement creates by calling its genuineness in question ; surely an arbitrary and unwarranted procedure. Accordingly Protestant divines of the most widely differing schools of thought have maintained on its basis, with quite preponderating sentiment if not with perfect unanimity, the permanence of at least the underlying principles of Old Testament requirement as attested by Christ, and the strict accordance of His own teaching therewith. It is not unimportant to observe, in confirmation of this view, how in one of the instances adduced—the limitation of the freedom of divorce permitted by Mosaic legislation—the Saviour grounds His action on a prior statement of the word of God, the forgotten significance of which it was His to bring to light. “Have ye not *read*,” He inquired, “that He which made them from the beginning made them male and female” (Matt. xix. 4).

This is perhaps as far as the statement under consideration warrants us in going. It is at least a step of doubtful validity and one certainly not favoured by the context, to take the expression “the law” as here used, either as the equivalent of Old Testament Scripture as a whole, and to base conclusions on the declaration with respect to the historic character of its contents, or to take it as inclusive of the Mosaic legislation in all its detailed enactments. Some of these were in the nature of the case provisional and temporary, perfect in their adaptation to the then existing conditions, but for that very reason to be abrogated or altered as unsuitable when these conditions had changed. It seems preferable, therefore, if not indeed imperatively required, to take the term “the law” in this declaration as designating, not the codex of Old Testament Scripture, but the law of Moses embodied therein, and that law not so much in its



detailed provisions, as in the divine idea which the Saviour recognised as underlying it, its governing principle, to which He Himself was to give a more adequate, a perfect form. Of this no jot or tittle should pass away. It should abide while heaven and earth abide. The Saviour's words in another part of the same discourse, "All things, therefore, whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them, for *this is the law* and the prophets" (Matt. vii. 12), may be adduced to show that it was not unusual for Him to identify the law with its great leading principle or principles. Now thus viewed the statement in Matthew v. 18 is readily seen to be entirely consistent with changes in Old Testament requirement, which modifying the form or altering the rule, only the more surely preserve and perfect the principle. The higher a view we take of the Saviour's person and work, the less disposition will there be to feel surprise that such changes are the consequent, not more of the changed conditions of mankind, than of His transcendent insight into the spiritual and the divine, and of His introduction of a new principle of life into the bosom of humanity.

It remains true and is not to be forgotten, that by far the most frequent reference which the Saviour makes to the Old Testament Scriptures is by way of appeal to their teachings as authoritative, as decisive both of doctrine and of duty. In His attitude towards them, there is very much, there is everything in fact, to lead us to prize them highly, nothing to give countenance to the tendency, so often seen, to relegate them to a place of very subordinate importance, if not to dispense with their use altogether, on the plausible ground that when we have the full light of day in the New Testament, it is worse than useless to grope among the

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shadows of the Old. They may not be put aside even on the plea of showing all the greater honour to the gospels and the epistles. The Great Teacher studied them. We may still trace Christ's finger on their pages. They entered, as we can see, as an appreciable element into the forces which shaped His wondrous life. In seeking to understand this life we may not overlook their formative influence, even while acknowledging, nay insisting, on their insufficiency to explain its unique greatness and originality; and let us learn too after Him, and incorporating His own teachings with theirs, to bow to the volume of inspiration, settling all questions alike of doctrine and of duty by the word so often found on His lips, "It is written".

## CHAPTER II.

### GOD.


THAT the question, What is God? is one of profound interest to us all needs only to be stated. We ask with a solicitude that attaches to scarcely any other subject of inquiry, What is the nature of the power that is over us, unseen, invisible, but ever-operative and all-controlling? Is it personal, and therefore intelligent, self-conscious, free; or is it an impersonal force, acting blindly and of necessity, an infinite and eternal substance, incapable of definition or determination by any notion which the human mind can form? Does the name stand for that which transcends nature and is distinct from it; or for that which is simply the summation of nature, the whole of which nature in its innumerable and diverse forms presents the parts or phases? And if it may be conceived as personal, if there is that in the nature of the Supreme Existence of which our faculty of intelligent self-determination is the feeble counterpart, if we may speak of it as He, then what is His character, what His disposition towards us, His creatures?

We are now to hear Christ's answer to these questions. His competence to give the answer does not arise simply from the fact of His essential and eternal relationship to God the Father, as His only begotten Son, though it is this which must ever furnish the supreme ground for confidence in the revelation, but it arises from this fact also, that more than any one who ever lived a human life He was filled

with the consciousness of God, He thought and felt and spoke and acted in conscious and never once interrupted harmony with the mind and will of God, was so one with Him in spirit and aim that He could do nothing of Himself. If love and intimacy are the conditions of knowledge, especially in the realm of the spiritual, as they assuredly are, then on this ground alone, apart from the other and still higher consideration, the nature, the character, of God must stand disclosed before His mind, as before that of no other human being. In full agreement with this is the claim which makes itself heard in the great word, "Neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son".

At the same time it will be seen that Christ teaches no absolutely new doctrine of God. The perfections which He ascribes to Him are those of which He is already seen to be possessed in Old Testament Scripture. As there, so here : the two ideas which are prominent are those of exalted majesty and of compassionate grace ; holiness and mercy. The distinctiveness, what may be termed the originality of the Saviour's view of the subject, comes out rather in the conception which is taken of the character of God as a whole, in the greater prominence in which certain attributes are set, in the new and closer applications which they receive, and in the manner, at once authoritative and familiar, in which the presence and perfections of God are pressed home, so that as the result of all the view of the Divine character, while not essentially different from that found in the Jewish Scriptures, certainly not discrepant, is both loftier and more human.

The teachings of Christ on this subject may be exhibited under the following heads :—





I.—THE NATURE OF GOD, OR WHAT MAY BE TERMED  
THE ESSENTIAL OR THE METAPHYSICAL QUALITIES  
OF HIS BEING.

1. His Unity. This, which is so often asserted in the Old Testament Scriptures, is not so much directly taught by Christ as it is implied in all His teaching. In one passage, however, a quotation indeed, it is distinctly expressed: "The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord" (Mark xii. 29). This unity may be conceived in two ways; either as numerical, denying the existence or the possibility of a second, in opposition to all polytheistic error, or, as integral, denying the possibility of division. The words quoted by the Saviour seem to point more naturally to the latter than to the former. They are not, The Lord our God is *the* one—the only—Lord, but the Lord our God is one Lord. Whether the truth designed to be expressed or not, there seems little reason to doubt that it is a truth, and a very important one. God is not constituted of different elements. There is no distinction in Him corresponding to that between flesh and spirit in us. He has no parts. His attributes, those under which we conceive Him, are not distinct from Him. They are Himself. God is one. This view of the statement is in full accord with the context, if it is not indeed demanded by it. The oneness of God, the absence of division or of parts in Him, may well ground the obligation to love Him with the undivided heart, with all the heart and soul and mind and strength.

On the other hand, this unity of God which Christ taught is not an absolute one. If God is one, the Godhead is not one. By this term we understand God as He exists in His

essential and eternal relations, or as He is viewed in His immanent nature and perfections. The word does not indeed occur in Christ's teachings, but, with the baptismal formula which He prescribed before us, it would be hazardous to affirm that the thing which it designates does not. This, however, is not the point in these studies at which to discuss at any length the doctrine of the Trinity. To do so it would be necessary to anticipate the consideration of the Saviour's testimony regarding His own person, and regarding the person of the Holy Spirit. It is sufficient now to say that the tenor of the Saviour's teaching respecting Himself, as well as that respecting the Holy Spirit, the claims which He makes (John iii. 13; viii. 58; viii. 42; xiv. 9; Matt. xi. 27), the prerogatives which He exercises (Mark ii. 5; John v. 17; x. 18), and the homage which He accepts (Matt. xvi. 16; John xx. 29), especially where interpreted and illumined by its experience of His abiding power, have compelled the Church, not to qualify and still less to discard the doctrine of the Divine unity, but to combine with it the recognition of a threefold distinction in the Divine nature, which for want of a better term we call personal. The doctrine of the Trinity, as most will be ready to admit, is purely a matter of revelation, and, as such, it rests primarily on the personal teachings of the Lord, even as it finds its continuous verification in His abiding power within the Church, which after Him confesses one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

2. His Spirituality. "God is a Spirit" (John iv. 24), or better, "God is Spirit," as in the marginal rendering of the Revised Version. To say that God is *a* Spirit might mean that He belongs to the class of spiritual beings, that He is an example of an order comprising other beings beside



Himself. But obviously that is not the purport of our Lord's statement. It will simply describe what the essential nature of God is, "God is Spirit". "The declaration," as Westcott remarks, "is unique in its majestic simplicity."


The first idea which the declaration will probably convey to most minds is that of immateriality. God is not material. The finest and most subtle of ethereal substances is as alien from His nature as the coarsest. He is therefore not the object of sensible apprehension: "No man hath seen God at any time" (John i. 18); "Ye have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His shape" (John v. 37). It is right to say that a meaning, strongly recommended by the context, has been given to the latter passage, which would make it inapplicable to the point in hand. By the connection in which the declaration of the spirituality of God is made, it is seen to involve the truth, that He cannot be confined to particular places or outward temples, that His is a presence everywhere operative and equally near to man wherever he is found. The more exact statement of its meaning would seem to be that He who is the proper object of human worship has no extension in space, that place has no application to His being. The true conception of God, such as Christ imparts to the woman of Samaria, makes the locality where worship is rendered of no account, the character of the worship rendered and its object everything.

And yet something more than the mere negative idea of immateriality must be implied in the term, in order that the declaration should be the basis as it is made here for that worship in spirit, and therefore in truth, which the Saviour enjoins. Dogmatic theologians, indeed, have found in the Saviour's statement the basis for a complete doctrine

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of God : thus, spirit is life, is light, is love ; God, therefore, who is Spirit is Life, is Light, is Love ; again, God is the absolute Spirit ; as such He is, therefore, *of* Himself, He is His own ground of existence ; *in* Himself, the conditions of Divine nature and Divine personality lie exclusively within the sphere of His self-existence ; *for* Himself, He is His own end. Without making the Saviour's declaration to the woman the ground of determinations so abstract as these, one may say that it is not only the freedom of God from the limitations of space which *it* expresses, but also and very specially the presence in Him of intelligence, affection, will, all those qualities which we designate as spiritual, and not their presence simply, but their presence after such a manner as to constitute His very being. The worship, therefore, which can alone honour Him, the worship "in truth," cannot be merely formal or sensuous, cannot consist simply in external rites or ceremonies, however impressively rendered. It must engage that in man, which is kindred with what God is, his spirit ; in other words, it must be spiritual worship.


Two remarks may be made here. First, this striking announcement of the spirituality of God, out of which in successive ages the summons to spiritual worship has ever anew risen, was made not to the Apostles, but to a humble and else unknown, if not also in her past life very sinful, woman. Nor can this be said to be a solitary or quite exceptional instance of His method of making disclosures of spiritual truth. To the man whose eyes He had opened and who was afterwards cast out of the synagogue, nameless and not elsewhere mentioned in the gospels, He made a more direct intimation of His Messianic dignity than we read of His making to any of the twelve : "Dost thou



believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee" (John ix. 35-37). Second, the all-important statement is made, not by way of formulating a creed, not as an essential article in a scheme of doctrine, but as a guide and motive to true and acceptable worship. In other words, the Saviour is not so much laying down a theological doctrine, as teaching a great lesson in practical religion. Much to the point are the words of Augustine, "In templo vis orare, in te ora; sed prius esto templum Dei, quia ille in templo suo exaudiet orantem".


3. His Personality. The well-known notes of personality are self-consciousness and self-determination. By these as inseparably conjoined, interpenetrating one another, what we term personal existence is constituted. The claim may be justly made that this quality of the Divine existence is really involved in the preceding—that the simple fact that God is Spirit carries with it the other, that He is personal. We have no direct knowledge of what spiritual being is, except as that possessed by ourselves, or that which we ourselves are; and in us it is self-conscious, it has the power of intelligent self-determination, in other words, it is personal.

We are not left, however, to deduce the personality of God by considerations of this general character. It is not necessary to go beyond the passage already considered to find the Saviour's indirect, indeed, but not less unmistakable testimony to it. If the term "spirit" is capable of being construed in a vague, pantheistic sense, it is made evident that it is not in that sense that He predicates it of God. In the very next clause to that in which His absolute



spirituality is affirmed, our Lord applies to the Divine Being a term denoting strict personality: "They that worship *Him* must worship Him in spirit and in truth". It is true, indeed, the exact word is not used: the personality of God is not directly and formally taught. It is rather, like the existence of God, assumed as at once true and understood. But it is everywhere implied in His teachings. Throughout He ascribed to God personal acts: "He gave His only begotten Son" (John iii. 16); He feedeth "the fowls of the air" (Matt. vi. 26); He maketh the sun to rise on "the evil and on the good" (Matt. v. 45); He hides "these things from the wise and prudent" and reveals "them unto babes" (Matt. xi. 25). If self-consciousness and self-determination are the unmistakable notes of personality, the Divine Being is everywhere represented by Christ as possessing and exhibiting them: "Even so it is not the *will* of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish" (Matt. xviii. 14); "This is the Father's *will* which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing" (John vi. 39). Once more He prays to Him, and He teaches us to pray to Him, as One who hears and answers prayer; the act surely of a personal being.

The importance of the Saviour's testimony to this truth will be fully understood by those only who take account of the necessity of the personality of God to religion, on the one hand, and of the difficulties which it has been thought by many to present to the intellect, on the other. It has been argued with no little plausibility that personality involves limitation; that this is of its very essence, and that it is, therefore, inconsistent with that absoluteness which we cannot help ascribing to the Infinite and Eternal Spirit.



With those who have approached the question from the philosophical standpoint the prevailing opinion in modern times has been that it was difficult or rather impossible to reconcile personal determination with that immanence of God in nature which belongs to any adequate or worthy idea of Him. On the other hand, as showing the uncertainty which attaches to all merely speculative treatment of such questions, it is instructive to note that in some of the most recent philosophical discussions it has been maintained not only that personality is consistent with the conception of an infinite being, but that it is only in the case of such a being that perfect personality is attainable. It is sufficient here to quote the words of Hermann Lotze : " Perfect Personality is in God only, to all finite minds there is allotted but a pale copy thereof ; the finiteness of the finite is not a producing condition of this personality, but a limit and a hindrance to its development ". Confronted by these opposing views, with what relief we turn to the words of Christ. If our intellectual perplexities are not solved, at least our faith is sustained and our hearts are reassured, as we hear Him speak, not of a blind impersonal force, controlling human life and destiny, not even of a power that works for righteousness, but of a Father in heaven, of One who speaks to us in His word and to whom we can speak in turn, who lives and who can be loved, whose hand feeds the hungry ravens, and whose heart yearns over His oft-straying children.

It has at the same time to be remembered that the personality of God is the indispensable presupposition to religion. Only between personal beings can that fellowship subsist in which religion, as a life, may be said to consist. Prayer, which is its breath, has meaning only as

it is addressed to One, who can hear and answer it. Confession of sin and supplication for forgiveness are both unmeaning, if the Being to whom they are spoken is not possessed of intelligence and will, that is, of personality, as we are. Well, the Saviour does not so much assert this in isolated statements, as it enters into all His thought of His heavenly Father. One may say, indeed, that there was scarcely any feature more characteristic of His human experience than an intense and abiding sense of the personality of Him from whom He came, and whose will it was His meat to do. It was this which relieved His earthly life of its loneliness and which, when it was about to close, disarmed the cross of its terrors. "Behold," He said, "the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me" (John xvi. 32).

## II.—THE CHARACTER OF GOD: HIS MORAL PERFECTIONS.

1. The Fatherhood of God as everywhere taught and in so many ways emphasised by Christ is the foremost truth to be taken into account here; fatherhood, *i.e.*, not so much in relation to Himself the Son, though this also, as in relation to those who in and through Him are likewise sons. This so significant aspect of the Divine character was not unknown in Old Testament times (Isa. lxiii. 16; lxiv. 8), but it stands out with a clearness and receives a prominence on Christ's lips formerly unknown. It is set by Him in such new and definite relations to men, to their needs and sorrows, as almost to amount to a new revelation, if, indeed, His words, "No man knoweth the Father but



the Son and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him" (R.V.), do not assert this claim for it. So far as the term may be regarded as charged with ethical import, its general significance as applied to God by Christ seems obvious enough. It presents Him to us, as not remote and inaccessible, a distant and cold divinity, but as at once near and gracious. In the Father heart love is in the ascendant. The name thus gives a like ascendancy to love in the Divine character. It carries with it the assurance that, notwithstanding the oft stern and remorseless aspects of physical nature, notwithstanding the prevalence in the world of suffering and of wrong, it is, so far at least as the sphere of sonship extends, love which is on the throne.

And possessing all this fulness of meaning, it is not used by the Saviour on rare occasions. On the contrary it is the common designation of which He makes use, when He speaks of God or speaks to Him. It is the first word which we hear from His lips as a child, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business" (Luke ii. 49); it is the last which His dying lips whispered, "Father, into Thy hand I commend My spirit" (Luke xxiii. 46), and between that first and this last there is a thousandfold repeated, Abba, Father. And He does not only Himself employ it, He at the same time empowers His disciples to do so. "After this manner, therefore, pray ye, Our Father which art in heaven" (Matt. vi. 9). He allays their fears, He lifts the burden of anxious care from off their breasts, by speaking to them of their heavenly Father's knowledge of their needs (Matt. vi. 26, 32), and by assuring them that it is not the will of their "Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish" (Matt. xviii. 14).

The question is at once raised, What exactly is this Father-

hood as taught by Jesus Christ? Does it relate itself equally to all men, without distinction of character, as it does admittedly without distinction of race? Or does it embrace His disciples, the subjects of His kingdom only? Does it belong to God as Creator and thus designate the relation which He sustains and the love which He bears to the human race as formed in His image and fitted for His fellowship; a relationship and a love therefore incapable of dissolution or change by any lapse from goodness in its object and subsisting even towards the lost? Or does it belong to Him only as in grace imparting a new life and is thus expressive of the relation which He sustains and the peculiar affection which He cherishes towards those who are the sharers of this life? More briefly, Is the Fatherhood of God, which Christ taught, indiscriminate and universal or is it restricted? The answer, so far as the present discussion is concerned, must be gathered simply from a careful consideration of the Saviour's use of the term. In any case the connections in which He employs it, and in which the Apostles employ it, to whom He promised His spirit, furnish a far safer guide to its meaning and scope than the considerations of an abstract and general kind which have been often made use of on the one side and on the other.

There is one constantly recurring use of the term in the gospels, in regard to which there should not be much dispute among Christian scholars; that, *viz.*, wherein it is employed to denote the relationship of God, the Father to Himself as the Son. In passages far too numerous to quote, Christ speaks of God as His Father: "He that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven" (Matt. vii. 21); "I and My Father are one" (John x. 30); "It is My Father which honoureth Me" (John viii. 54); and even in many other

passages where the possessive pronoun is not forthcoming, we are safe in regarding the term as used in the same high and distinctive sense, for example: "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son" (Matt. xi. 27); "The Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into His hand" (John iii. 35). Now here at least Fatherhood and Sonship are reciprocal; and even if we do not say at this stage that both are eternal and transcendent, denoting immanent relationships in the Godhead, we may say that this Sonship, however it may be related to that which men come to possess, is unique, both in its ground and in its character. He is *the* Son, the "only begotten Son," son in a sense in which no man, no angel is. And as the Sonship in this instance is unique, so must the Fatherhood be. We are safe, therefore, in affirming not only that the term, the Father, had a fulness of blessed meaning for Christ's mind which it has had for no human intelligence, but that it denoted and denotes as the correlative of His Sonship something higher than, something specifically different from, that which it denotes as ever against the derivative or at least purely human sonship of all others. Accordingly we never find the words "Our Father" on the lips of Christ, unless, indeed, in prescribing that form of prayer which He taught His disciples and in which obviously it was not meant that He Himself should join; while in at least one striking statement He expressly discriminates the filial relationship which is proper to Himself from that in which they stand: "I ascend unto My Father and your Father" (John xx. 17).

The real difficulty commences when we begin to consider the Fatherhood of God in its purely human relations. What is its meaning then or has it in this connection more than

one meaning? Whom does it embrace, all men, or those only who have been brought into a new and gracious relationship to God through Jesus Christ? It may be at once admitted that the present tendency of modern thought is strongly in favour of the wider view. It is the view taken without exception by theologians belonging to what is termed the broad school from Maurice downwards. Among the more recent works we meet it in Gore's *Incarnation of the Son of God*, in Bishop Moorehouse's *The Teaching of Christ*, and in Principal Fairbairn's *Christ in Modern Theology*, in which, indeed, it is made the basis of the entire system of doctrine. The author who has probably done more to popularise it among English-speaking Christians than any other is F. W. Robertson, who states it with great confidence, but without almost any attempt to establish it by exegetical considerations. As over against the Romanist, with whom baptism makes the man the child of God, and as over against the evangelical theologian, with whom faith makes him God's child, this eloquent preacher teaches that man is everywhere and apparently in the same sense the child of God.

At first sight this view of the Fatherhood of God might seem to be that taught in the gospels. It is in its favour that the ever-recurring name for God on Christ's lips when addressing men of every variety of character is, the Father (John iv. 21 ; v. 45 ; viii. 29). It finds apparent support in the great passage (John iii. 16) which proclaims God's love to the world without distinction either of race or of character. It seemed to harmonise best with the representation of God contained in the parable of the prodigal son ; some would assert it is demanded by it. The revelation of God in Christ, the declaration " He that hath seen Me, hath seen

the Father," would also appear to point to a Fatherhood, whose range is not determined by what men are, one which is indiscriminate and universal, which is directed equally and in the same sense to saint and to sinner, even to saved and to lost. Accordingly some, as Dr. Dale, who have not been able to depart so far from established modes of thought as to maintain the actual sonship of all men, have come to hold the universal character of the Fatherhood of God. God, it is said, *is* Father, ever Father; men *become* sons. Others, as we have seen, with more far-reaching consequences to Christian doctrine, but perhaps also with greater logical consistency, maintain the universal character alike of the Fatherhood of God and of the sonship of men.

The question for us, then, is, Does the Saviour's use of the term in the gospels demand, or rather does it permit, this view, either in the one form stated above or in the other? So far as we can see, it does not. The exact point at issue will not be overlooked. That is not whether there is a sense in which, in virtue of man's creation in the image of God and of being His offspring, God may be regarded as the universal Father (this is not under dispute), but whether the Fatherhood of God which Christ taught and of which He makes such frequent mention is of this character.

Now, in the first place, there seemed to be good ground for saying that in all the instances recorded in the gospels in which, addressing men, He terms God *their* Father He is speaking either of disciples or to them. In the Sermon on the Mount, for example, the expressions continually recur, "your Father," "your heavenly Father," "thy Father"; but by both Matthew and Luke the discourse is expressly said to be addressed to His disciples: "When He was set His disciples came unto Him: and He opened His mouth,

and taught them" (Matt. v. 1, 2); "And He lifted up His eyes on His disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor : for yours is the kingdom of God" (Luke vi. 20). Nor is this all ; one cannot read the discourse carefully without coming to the conclusion that the terms referred to are applied to those addressed in virtue of their discipleship and as subjects of His kingdom. In one instance, indeed, it is as expressly distinguished from those outside of the kingdom that their relationship to God is thus characterised : "For after all these things do the Gentiles seek ; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things" (Matt. vi. 32). It must be evident that this statement would lose much of its force if the terms "your heavenly Father" were equally applicable to the heathen spoken of and to the disciples addressed. Again, it was His disciples whom He taught to pray, saying "Our Father, which art in heaven" (Luke xi. 2 ; Matt. vi. 9). It is obviously to disciples, and to them only, that He says, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke xii. 32); and so throughout the gospels. The passages, indeed, of a like purport are far too numerous to quote.

On the other hand, it does not appear that the Saviour ever uses the term Father in designating God's relationship to those who were viewed as outside of His kingdom. There were many such in His day, many who either scorned His claims or who were indifferent to them. He often addressed them, now in the language of appeal, now in that of warning. But there does not appear to be a single instance in which, referring to them, He says either "their Father" or "your Father". The use of the pronoun of possession along with the term Father seems to be found exclusively within what may be termed the circle of grace as distin-

guished from that of nature. The statement in Matthew v. 45 may appear to be an exception ; in reality it is not. For while it is there affirmed that God sends His rain and His sunshine without distinction on the evil and the good, and this indiscriminate goodness is held up as a pattern to His children, it is by no means implied that this is really the fatherly love which He extends to the members of His kingdom. This distinction in the Saviour's use of the term is too marked to be without significance, and, it may be added, it is in striking contrast with the use of it to-day by those who believe in the universal Fatherhood. It might be going too far to claim that it is decisive of the whole question ; but at least it may be said that it is difficult to see its consistency with the ascription by Christ to God of a Fatherhood of an unrestricted and indiscriminate character.

Thus far the evidence in favour of the limited application of the term by the Saviour, it may be claimed is negative only. But evidence of a positive kind is not wanting. In one passage at least He denies in express terms the existence of the relationship in question in the case of those—men of evil and perverse spirit—whom He was at the time addressing. "If," He said to them, "God were your Father, ye would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God" (John viii. 42). Their love of Him is thus made the ethical test of a like paternity. That this love was wanting in their case was evidence that they stood in no filial relationship to God ; in the Saviour's words, that God was not their Father. It is obvious that this mode of reasoning does not so much lose all its force as it becomes wholly inapplicable, when the Fatherhood, to which reference is made, is regarded as indiscriminate and universal, as much irrespective of character as it is of race.

Again, fatherhood and sonship are ordinarily regarded as reciprocal, and thus commensurate the one with the other. Now, it is claimed, on what appears valid grounds, that the sonship of the gospels, as of the epistles, is a sonship which the Saviour does not simply declare, but which He also mediates ; in other words, is one which does not belong to man simply as man, and as a right, but which belong to him solely as a member of Christ's Kingdom, and as a privilege graciously accorded. This is surely the force of the statement : " As many as received Him, to them gave He the right (*ἐξουσία*) to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name, which were born, not of blood, . . . but of God " (John i. 12, 13). It is true this is not the direct testimony of the Saviour Himself, but it is that of the Evangelist. Evidently it affords very strong confirmation of the view which, on independent grounds, has been taken of the nature of the sonship into which Christ admits men, and therefore of that Divine Fatherhood which He unfolded. We can come on purely exegetical grounds to no other conclusion than this, that the one and the other are distinctive of the members of His Kingdom, while they are at the same time common to them all.

It might be added here as still further explaining and confirming the conclusion thus reached, that this view of the subject has its root in the Old Testament Scriptures. There it is Israel, not the race of Adam, but the seed of Abraham, the theocratic people, that is represented as God's son, as He its Father (Isa. lxiii. 16 ; lxiv. 8 ; Hos. xi. 1). Under the New Testament, in the light of Christ's teaching, and may we not say as the result of His whole work, the sonship which was corporate, national and in a manner external, becomes individual and spiritual, but it is no more



indiscriminate and universal in the one case than in the other. And as with the sonship, so with the Fatherhood, which is its correlative, it must be regarded as the distinctive and inestimable privilege of those who are children of God by faith in Jesus Christ.

It is not forgotten that by some, among others Dr. Dale, the inference from a limited sonship to a restrictive Fatherhood has been regarded as unwarranted, on the ground that the two conceptions are not really reciprocal; the former being distinctly ethical, which, it is claimed, the latter is not. It is alleged that the Holy Scriptures, while not ascribing sonship to men indiscriminately, do ascribe a Fatherhood to God of a universal character, and that this is the very Fatherhood which the Saviour taught. It may be at once admitted that this view has not a little to say for itself. It is certainly less open to objection on doctrinal grounds than that which makes both the Fatherhood of God and the sonship of men indiscriminate and universal, and if it is not in accord with the teachings of Christ and His apostles it conflicts less obviously and at fewer points with their teachings. Still, it is difficult to harmonise it with the general tenor of the Saviour's teaching on the subject, as exhibited above, while it seems to be in direct variance with the statement in John viii. 42.

We come to the conclusion, accordingly, that in the connections in which it is set by the Saviour, sonship implies and rests on, not simply creation in the image of God, community of nature with God in respect of intelligence and moral capacity, but also the possession through Christ of a life which makes man kindred with God in a still higher sense, and which lays the foundation for the presence and operation of a fatherly love on God's part, in the exercise

of which He ministers to the needs of His children (Matt. vi. 32), embraces in His regard their every interest (Matt. x. 30), and listens to their prayers, giving them in answer thereto "good things," the "Holy Spirit," that supreme good (Matt. vii. 11; Luke xi. 13).

It has to be admitted, however, that the Divine Fatherhood is not in the gospels, and in the words of Christ therein contained, so distinctly and expressly connected with the impartation to believers of the new life as in the epistles, that of John especially. There is no saying of Christ which could be regarded as the equivalent in this respect of 1 John v. 1: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him". Here sonship, if on the one hand connected with the faith that Jesus is the Christ, is on the other made to have its ultimate source in the new birth, or the impartation to the man by God of a new life. He is a son who is begotten of God. The Fatherhood here is obviously just as wide as, but no wider, than the circle of those who are sons. Now we have in the gospels and in the words of Christ to Nicodemus an emphatic reference to the same supernatural bestowment—"born again," or "anew," or "from above" (marginal reading in the Revised Version), "born of water and of the Spirit," but only in the Prologue of John's Gospel, in no word of Christ, is this new birth in express and direct terms said to be the ground of the believer's sonship, and of the correlative Divine Fatherhood. This circumstance, however, does not detract from the force of the considerations adduced above to sustain the contention that the Fatherhood of God which the Saviour taught was not indiscriminate and universal, though it makes the argument in support of it

less absolutely conclusive than we can conceive it to have been.

The contrary view to that taken has been supposed by very many to be strongly supported by the parable, as it is called, of the prodigal son (Luke xv. 11-32), I cannot but think without good reason. The parable may well be taken as a welcome and most blessed testimony to the love which is in the heart of God for the erring and the lost, to the joy in heaven with which their return is welcomed, and therefore it is a complete vindication of the Saviour's conduct in eating and drinking with publicans and sinners. But when we are asked to go farther and to assent to the claim that it teaches either directly or by implication that sinful men everywhere are sons of God as really as the regenerate are, and that the relation of God to all without distinction is that of Father in the very sense in which Christ employed the word to designate the relationship of God to the members of His kingdom, we may well hesitate. It will be found that the entire force of the argument leading to this conclusion rests on the use of the terms father and son in the parable. But the parable is one of three. In the other two, intended to set forth the same truth, the terms are shepherd and sheep; woman and silver-piece. Evidently all are figurative. God's seeking love is represented in the first under the figure of the shepherd seeking his lost sheep; in the second under the figure of the woman seeking her lost coin; in the third, that in which so many find the universality of the Divine Fatherhood taught, this seeking love of God is represented under the figure of the father seeking his lost son. Now what we are virtually asked to do is in the third case to turn the figure into a fact, that is, to apply the figurative term father to God, just as if the touching story in which it

occurs were a direct narrative of His doings and not a parable at all. Could this be done in the other two cases, in the second especially? Obviously not. The attempt to do so would land us in a form of speech from which, as applied to God, every devout and reverend mind would shrink. The truth is, if we may be permitted to say anything so obvious, the father in the parable is not God; he is an ordinary human father, such as the Saviour saw in great numbers around him in Judea and Galilee. The most we can say, and it is the unspeakably precious truth which the parable sets in so clear a light, is that he represents God, that there is in the heart of God such love for sinful men and such yearning desire for their return to Himself as make themselves felt in the father's heart for his wayward and erring child, but this is far from authorising the conclusion that God is the universal Father, or, to put the point in dispute more explicitly, that the Fatherhood which Christ taught, and to which He has reference in such words as these, "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things," is one which embraces men without distinction of character any more than of race.

It is important to notice that in limiting the Fatherhood of God in the manner indicated, as we judge Christ's statements regarding it compel us to do, we secure in the only possible way its full and blessed significance, its immeasurable wealth of comfort. No doubt a universal Fatherhood is at first sight a more attractive conception, and we cannot be surprised that it should appeal powerfully to the imagination and the heart of men. But those who are fascinated by it do not always, perhaps do not often, stop to reflect how comparatively little it means and at how great a cost of significance the extension of application is purchased. A

Divine Fatherhood of men which should be common to the oppressor and his victim, to the sensual and the pure, to the hypocrite and the saint, how little of support and of solace it would seem to yield amid life's inevitable weaknesses and sorrows! Surely this cannot be the Fatherhood of which the Saviour spoke to the disciples as the answer to all their needs and fears; and even less the sonship which it involves, that sonship of which Christ's own is the type.

In conclusion, on this difficult subject, in which no fair mind will claim that all the arguments lie on one side, I would say that the view which has been taken must be held, if justice is to be done to the whole teaching of Christ, in conjunction with the maintenance of a love on the part of God which goes out to men at large and which is the source of redemption (John iii. 16). Between those who hold the restricted character of the Fatherhood of God in the sense in which Christ speaks of it, and those who hold the unrestricted or universal, there need be no difference on this point. As has been already stated in our discussion of this subject, we are not permitted to doubt that the love of God which the Saviour proclaims, the love which He exhibits who in His own person reveals God, is a love which in one aspect of it at least goes forth to men as men, a love which is not called into exercise by any goodness found in its object, but which is rather the gracious source and sustaining principle of all highest goodness in man. What we may doubt is, that this is the equivalent of the Fatherly love and the filial relationship of which Christ assures those who are members of His kingdom. We are of opinion, for the reasons given, that it is not; that the Fatherhood of God which He unfolded is one which obtains strictly within the realm of grace.

We pass from the consideration of this general but extremely important characterisation of God as Father, to look briefly at those statements of Christ which have reference to

2. Separate attributes or perfections belonging to the character of God.

(a) Mercy or the love of pity ; love exercised towards the fallen and the lost. The most striking representation of this feature in the Divine character is that given in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke xv. 11-32); a parable which, were all the other words spoken by our Saviour lost, and the epistles with them, would itself be nothing less than a gospel of hope to man. It would be all of this, for it is not only the assurance of a welcome on God's part to the sinner who returns, come from what far country of shame and misery he may, but the declaration of God's desire for his return, of His seeking love. The two preceding parables (Luke xv. 1-10) set forth in substance the same truth, though from the nature of the illustrations employed they are less capable of representing in the same direct way the Divine pity.

The pity, or love rather, which is a still deeper sentiment, finds its crowning expression in the gift of "His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). Any attempt to narrow the love here spoken of, by making "the world" towards which it flows, anything else or less than that of sinners of mankind, must be resisted whatever difficulty may be found in harmonising it with the special purpose of grace also revealed in Scripture. If any text has a greater claim than another to be regarded as regulative of the views to be entertained respecting the mind of

God in the work of human redemption, we may say this one possesses it. Almost more than any other it epitomises the gospel.

To complete the view which the Saviour gives us of the character of God on this side of it there should be added here, to the love of pity, as it may be termed, His love of complacency which finds its highest and only absolutely satisfying object in the Son Himself (Matt. iii. 17 ; Luke ix. 35), but which is exercised also towards those who love Him and in love obey His commandments in accordance with the statement, " If a man love Me, he will keep My words, and My Father will love him " (John xiv. 23).

(b) Holiness. The Saviour's testimony to this perfection of God comes out in the words, " Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me," or, still better, as the Revised Version has them, " Keep them in My name which Thou hast given Me " (John xvii. 11, R.V.). It has been claimed by Wendt and others that the main idea in the Old Testament conception of the holiness of God was that of His separation from the world, His exaltation above all earthly and mundane being, and that the ethical element, if present in the conception at all, was at least not the prominent one. However that may be, it is otherwise here. The purport of the prayer which finds its plea in the terms, " Holy Father," shows us that with Christ the dominating idea in His conception of the Divine holiness is no longer that of metaphysical transcendence, it is that of moral purity ; absolute separateness, not so much from mundane existence as from all forms of evil. The prayer itself which this conception motives is a very striking one, " Keep them in Thy name ". The " name of God " is the perfect expression for man of what God

is. This name, probably with special reference to the term Father, had been given to Christ to reveal. It is here contemplated as the sphere of security for His followers. In this name, that is, in the knowledge of God which it constituted, they should find safety against the ever-aggressive force of evil : "The words, in Thy name," it has been said, "make the revelation of the Divine character granted to the Apostles the enclosing wall, as it were, of the sacred region in which they were to be kept" (Godet). The reader will not fail to notice the suitableness of the appellation applied to God in this petition to the blessing which it asks. The keeping is keeping against the ever-active and ever-destructive power of evil, and it is as Himself holy, at once holy and gracious, "Holy Father," that God is entreated to effect it.

(c) Righteousness. This attribute of God is also lifted into view by the Saviour in the intercessory prayer, and in these words, "O righteous Father, the world has not known thee" (John xvii. 25). If by the previous epithet the Saviour designates the absolute purity of God, His utter separateness from all evil, by this one He may be regarded as denoting that Divine perfection in the exercise of which He maintains the distinction between good and evil, distributes reward and penalty in accordance with desert, and delights in and furthers righteousness in His creatures ; what we may term His absolute rectitude. The context is very generally held to explain the reference to this Divine perfection in the words before us. They are immediately preceded by the expression of the desire by Christ that those given to Him by the Father and to whom He had made known the Father's name should be with Him and behold His glory. The words, "O righteous Father," occurring in this connection, have been regarded as con-



taining a virtual plea for the granting of this desire. As righteous, it is said, He cannot but concede to the Son the presence with Him and all that is implied in it of those to whom He had made the great disclosure. It is more than doubtful, however, whether the words were spoken with any such reference—whether, indeed, the supposition of such a reference does not weaken the impression which this declaration with its tone at once plaintive and triumphant is fitted to produce.

Before passing from this aspect of the Divine character, some notice may be taken of the infrequent reference to it in the Saviour's teaching, especially in view of its constantly recurring presentation in the writings of the Apostle of the Gentiles. In these, as every reader of Scripture knows, the righteousness of God, righteous as an attribute of God, and justification as His act meet us on almost every page. It would be possible, doubtless, to draw conclusions from this circumstance unfavourable to the strict accordance of the teachings of Christ and those of Paul, or even to their possible reconciliation. But the diversity admits of at least partially satisfactory explanation. The work in which, according to the representation of the Apostle, the righteousness of God in the matter of man's salvation is revealed, and on the ground of which his justification proceeds—the death of the cross—had not been accomplished when the personal teachings of the Saviour were all but completed. The fact must in the nature of the case precede the doctrine, which is, properly speaking, just the Spirit's interpretation of the fact. It should not occasion surprise, therefore, and still less create serious difficulty to find such diversities between the earlier and the later teachings of the New Testament. On the most important points after all they

are in substantial accord, such differences as exist consisting for the most part in the greater degree of development which the truth received in the course of years and under the teaching of the Spirit. This is finely shown in the Bampton Lecture entitled *The Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament*, a work distinguished not less by elevation of sentiment than by perfection of style.

(d) Goodness, and that of an exclusive or absolute kind. The word here is "There is none good but one, that is God" (Luke xviii. 19). In general we understand by the goodness of God, His benevolence, the Divine perfection in the exercise of which He ministers to the well-being and happiness of His creatures. Here it would seem to designate moral excellence, or moral perfection in the widest and most comprehensive sense. The light in which this statement is to be viewed, as bearing on the Saviour's own character, will be more appropriately considered under another head. That with which we are in the meantime concerned is the direct testimony which it bears to the goodness of God, His absolute moral perfection, inclusive no doubt of benevolence, but not limited thereto, having this, however, as its deepest and innermost ground. It is surely of unspeakable importance to us, confronted with so much in nature and providence that looks like the opposite of goodness, with pain and sorrow and sin on every hand, to have this testimony from the lips of Christ; to be assured on His authority that God is good and good with a goodness that is all His own.

The term "perfect" (τέλειος) is also one which the Saviour applies to the Father. "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. v. 48). The perfection here predicated of God is obviously

ethical not metaphysical; and closely connected as the statement is with the immediately preceding words, it may be inferred that it has special relation to His exercise of love or mercy, as unhindered by men's ingratitude or opposition; perfect and not partial. In this way something like agreement is reached between the reading in Matthew and that in Luke: "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful" (Luke vi. 36).

It will be seen that the Saviour teaches no absolutely new doctrine of God. The attributes ascribed to Him are those with which we are already familiar in the Old Testament Scriptures. Even the name of Father as applied to Him is not entirely new. It is found already on the lips of the prophets (Isa. lxiii. 16; lxiv. 8; Jer. iii. 19). And yet in passing from their writings to the gospels we are conscious of a wide difference. God as revealed to us by Christ and in Him is somehow nearer, more gracious, more tenderly interested in us. The name of Father ceases to be a rare and occasional appellation, it becomes the almost exclusive term in speaking of God and in speaking to Him; and it is not only used with far greater frequency, it becomes on Christ's lips a term of much deeper significance, one illuminating as never before both the character of God and the position of man. The separate or, as we might term them, the severer attributes of the Divine character are not absorbed, are not lost in the Fatherhood which Christ teaches, but they are qualified by its mild radiance, as seen in these expressions, "Holy Father," "O righteous Father".

### III.—THE AGENCY OF GOD IN THE WORLD.

1. In the sphere of nature. He clothes the grass of the field (Matt. vi. 30); He feeds the fowls of the air (Matt. vi.

26) ; He marks the fall of the sparrow (Matt. x. 29). The view which sees only the operation of blind nature forces in the constant changes going on in the material world is altogether strange to the Saviour's teaching. With Him these agencies are but the forces which God employs. They are never permitted to hide Him, still less to take His place. He sees and would teach us too to see the living, personal God at work in the humblest and most common processes of nature as in the mightiest and most important. Thus, even for a religious view of nature, the world is under the weightiest obligations to the teachings of Christ.

2. In the realm of human life. Here also the agency of God is asserted in the most direct way ; and it is asserted simply, without any attempt to establish it by argument or to relate it to the freedom and responsibility of man, and to that use of his natural powers on which his lot in life seems so dependent. He "is kind unto the unthankful and the evil" (Luke vi. 35). "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. v. 45) ; He gives "good things to them that ask Him" (Matt. vii. 11) ; He shall "much more clothe" His children. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matt. x. 30). It is an agency which extends to soul and body. He "is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. x. 28), and it is in its very nature transcendent, supreme. He is not "Father" only, but "Lord of heaven and earth" (Matt. xi. 25). It is no doubtful authority which He wields, but one sovereign and all-controlling. Earthly rulers have power only as He concedes it to them. "Thou (Pilate) couldst have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above,"

that is, from God, "therefore he" (in all likelihood, Caiaphas) "that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin" (John xix. 11); thus the God whom Christ reveals is at once immanent and transcendent, in all and over all, One fitted both to attract our confidence and to inspire our awe.

3. In the work of redemption. Here the teaching of the Saviour is naturally much more full. The careful reader of the gospels will observe the following aspects of the agency of God the Father in this sphere.

(a) He is represented as originating redemption. He "gave His only-begotten Son" (John iii. 16). He "sent" Him (John iii. 17; vi. 38, 39). Both terms are employed by Christ, the latter, however, much more frequently than the former. The one "gave" is expressive of the sacrifice which Divine love made in the incarnation; the other "sent" of the appearance of the Incarnate Word, as charged with a definite mission. Both alike point to God the Father as the originating power in man's redemption. Whatever views we are led to form of the Trinity, of the relation of the three persons within the Godhead, it has to be admitted that our Lord uniformly presents Himself as the Gift of God, as the sent of the Father. A certain primacy, however, to be reconciled with that unity of essence or nature which the Church has always recognised as belonging to the persons of the Godhead, is by the general tenor of Christ's teaching accorded to the Father. He is made by it the fount of redemption. The foundation is thus laid for the great Pauline statement, "All things" (*τὰ πάντα*, all *the* things named in the context as connected with salvation) "are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. v. 18).

(b) He initiates the Saviour into His work and sustains

Him in it by His testimony. On this point, it is obvious, we must be careful to speak with reverence and with caution. We must keep clear of any form of statement which would bring the Saviour into the same line with the prophets or other messengers sent from God. The very terms applied to Him, when spoken of in this capacity, "He whom God hath sent," not to mention those which directly set forth His Divine dignity, show by their absoluteness that He stands on a different plane from all others. But there are teachings in the gospels, bearing on the particular before us, to which too little attention has been paid, mainly, we imagine, because the Church has been slow to realise all that is involved in the real and perfect humanity of her Divine Lord. To this head belongs the testimony borne by God the Father to Jesus Christ at His baptism, on the Mount of Transfiguration and on other occasions (Matt. iii. 17 ; Luke ix. 35 ; John xii. 28). It is not necessary to suppose that the consciousness of His unique Sonship had its origin in any of these testimonies. His words in the temple (Luke ii. 49) show Him to have been in possession of this already in His twelfth year, but they must have been of weighty moment in confirming that consciousness.

Here also belong the words, "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God ; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him" (John iii. 34). The renderings of this passage, it is true, are very various, but in nearly all of them there is involved on the part of God a continuous equipment of the Saviour for His work, and that on a scale not vouchsafed to other messengers sent forth. It is as a result of this possession by Him of the entire fulness of the Spirit, that His revelation of divine things, "the words

of God " as spoken by Him, possess an absolute character, not belonging to those of any merely human teacher. To the same effect are the words which follow, " The Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth " (John v. 20); and the revelation is a progressive one: " He will show Him greater works than these that ye may marvel ". Witness is thus borne throughout the gospels to the immanence of God in Jesus Christ; to the agency of the Father in the whole course of the beneficent and wondrous activity of the Son, nowhere in more explicit terms than in the verse immediately preceding the one just quoted: " The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do, for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise " (John v. 19).

(c) He is still further represented as actively engaged in the process by which individual men are drawn to Christ and led to believe on His name. Those who are found in the ranks of discipleship are spoken of by Christ as persons who have " heard and learned of the Father " (John vi. 45); as drawn by the Father (vi. 44); and in numerous passages as " given " to Him out of the world by the Father (John xvii. 2, 6, 9, 12, 24; vi. 37). This giving has been frequently, indeed in some circles of theological thought almost universally, regarded as having direct reference to God's elective purpose; thus to a giving in eternity and therefore, since on this view of it those embraced in the gift were not yet born, in idea, in the mind and intention of God rather than in actual historic fact. The words have thus been very generally taken to designate a transaction in eternity between the Father and the Son, in which the whole body of the elect were made over to the latter to be by Him redeemed and saved. It was so taken by Augustine

and Beza, and among moderns, Dr. Hodge, as was perhaps to be anticipated, has lent the weight of his name to this view. That it should have obtained so wide acceptance must be regarded as an evidence of the extent in which men are governed in their interpretation of Scripture statements by traditional opinions or by theological rather than exegetical considerations. It would appear to be untenable as the force of the Saviour's language in the passages adduced. One has only to read the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel of John carefully, to discover that those spoken of therein as given to the Saviour were the Apostles, including Judas Iscariot, or at most the then existing circle of discipleship, and that they are expressly distinguished from those "who were hereafter to believe" on Him "through their word" (John xvii. 20). The direct reference of the statement, therefore, is not to the Divine purpose but to its execution. The *giving* spoken of is not in eternity and therefore of persons existing only in the mind of the Creator, but in time and of those possessing definite, historic existence. It must therefore be taken to mean God the Father's bringing men to Jesus Christ by the orderings of His providence and by the visitations of His grace, His disposing one and another to come to the Saviour in the exercise of faith in Him and as His disciples and followers.

This view is strongly confirmed by the parallel statement in an earlier part of the same gospel and by the context in which it occurs: "All that the Father giveth (*δίδωσιν*) Me, shall come to Me" (John vi. 37). The tense is the present, not the past, in which it is often misquoted and would be properly rendered "is giving"; and the context interprets this *giving* as "drawing" and "teaching": "No man can come to Me except the Father which hath sent Me draw



him" (John vi. 44); "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me" (John vi. 45). "The first," says Godet, "no more refers to the eternal decree of election than do the last two. The *gift* denotes those moral wants, those spiritual aspirations, produced in teachable minds by the previous agency of the Father."

This is the view taken of the frequently recurring expression by Meyer, Westcott, Dr. John Brown, and, at a much earlier period, by Bengel. It may be observed, that while not directly teaching the doctrine of election, it is not inconsistent therewith; rather may it be regarded as involving this doctrine. For this giving, teaching, drawing of one another to Christ by God, with its resultant faith and discipleship, in what would it appear to root more naturally than in the sovereign and gracious choice of them to salvation? But while this may be the implication of the Saviour's language in the passages under discussion, it does not appear to be the truth directly taught. That is rather the agency of God in leading men by His providence and by His grace, by circumstances in their history, such as parentage, education, companionship, sufferings, and by the operations of His Spirit, to the Saviour, predisposing them to faith and discipleship. It is surely a very significant and at least on one side very blessed truth, of which the Saviour's words are the assurance, that God does thus co-operate with the sinner in the matter of his salvation, even preventing him by His grace, and so ordering the circumstances of the outward life and the course of thought and feeling as to draw him Christward, putting the soul under gentle but efficacious solicitations to faith and holiness. It is obviously

one of the considerations, if not, indeed, the main one, to inspire the Saviour's confidence, and fortify His heart against the thought of possible failure in view of the unbelief of multitudes whom He addressed. The "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth" (Matt. xi. 25), is not heard here, but the spirit from which it flowed is present. There is an unmistakable undertone of calm and thankful confidence in the words, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me," following as they do the statement, "Ye also have seen Me and believe not" (John vi. 36).

(d) He desires, in a manner wills, the salvation of all thus given to the Saviour: "It is not the will of My Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish" (Matt. xviii. 14); "This is the Father's will, which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me, I should lose nothing. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life" (John vi. 39, 40). Taking the two verses together, and understanding those spoken of in the former verse as *given* to the Saviour as identical with those who "see the Son and believe on Him" in the latter, the statement presents no difficulty. It is the uniform testimony of Scripture, that it is God's will in the strong sense of the term, the sense in which will is the equivalent of act, that all who believe on Christ should attain eternal life. Admittedly a difficulty readily arises from the statement of the thirty-ninth verse when disconnected with that in the fortieth. Among those given to the Saviour was Judas (John xvii. 12). The Scriptures lead us to believe he was lost (Acts i. 25), as indeed the designation applied to him in the passage seems to import. He was lost then notwithstanding the will of the Father for the salvation of

all those given to Christ. If this be so, we would seem to be all but irresistibly led to the conclusion that the will referred to in the passage cannot be the decretive will of God, but rather what German theologians are accustomed to term His grace-will (*Gnaden-Wille*); His gracious disposition, as distinguished from His positive determination of will. It is true, there is another solution of the difficulty. A comparison of the passage with that in Luke iv. 26, 27, where the same expression (*εἰ μὴ*) is found, makes it evident that we are not necessitated to regard Judas as reckoned by Jesus in the number of those whom the Father had formerly given Him. In that case, this particular form of difficulty disappears. In any case if there are difficulties involved in the reconciliation of the several statements adduced, the Saviour does not look at them. He contents Himself with the assurance that the whole mind and heart of the Father is turned towards the salvation of those who are led to believe on His name.

(e) He is represented as possessing and exercising the power to secure the salvation of those who are genuine disciples of Christ; those who in the language of the Saviour are termed "His sheep". "They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand. My Father which gave them Me is greater than all and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand" (John x. 28, 29). The power of God to secure the absolute safety of those who in the language of the context are Christ's sheep against all opposing forces from without, whether of man or devil, is the point to which this statement of Christ is directed.

It is a fair subject for argument what bearing, if any, the statement has on the question whether the believer himself, in the exercise of that natural liberty which faith in Christ

does not destroy, may not defeat this end, deprive himself of salvation by apostatising from Christ. Granted that it carries with it the assurance of salvation to the faith that holds out to the end, does it contain also the assurance that the faith of all true believers will so hold out. Expositors of equal ability and piety are ranged on different sides on this question. Meyer and Westcott unite in holding that the words do not contain any absolute pledge of continuance in a state of grace on the part of those who have been brought into such a state. Meyer says: "Liberty and the possibility of apostasy are not thus excluded". Westcott says: "We must carefully distinguish between the certainty of God's promises and His infinite power on the one hand, and the weakness and variableness of man's will on the other. We cannot be protected against ourselves in spite of ourselves." Even Godet takes the same ground as to the force of the assurance: "When Jesus said, 'greater than all,' it is evidently of external enemies, not of the unfaithfulness of the sheep themselves, that He intended to speak".

Augustine, Calvin, Bengel and many others are found on the opposite side. It must, we think, be admitted that the view against which they contend does not so much impair the significance of the assurance as empty it of its most essential element. What the believer needs, is not simply the assurance that he has nothing to fear, as regards his ultimate safety, provided only he maintain his faith in Christ and union with Him, but even more the assurance that the grace which has drawn him to Christ is adequate to keep him united to Him in the face of all discouragement, opposition and seductive influence. So far as his salvation is concerned—and it is exactly this which is the

matter in hand—external foes have to be feared only as they have power to detach the soul from its simple-hearted allegiance to Christ, not otherwise. How can he possibly forfeit life or have any fear of forfeiting it, who continues in vital union with Him who is the life? What he may fear, amid the consciousness of his weakness and instability, is the severance of this union; and if, as Meyer, Westcott, Godet and many others hold, enemies from without may effect this severance, if the world, the flesh and the devil have power to detach a soul from Christ that was in vital union with Him, have power to snatch out of the fold and thrust into the wastes of sin and woe one who was numbered by Christ among His sheep, then what of strength or comfort is left for us in the statement at first sight so assuring, “No one is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand,” how is its truth even preserved? On the ground of such considerations as these, we find ourselves constrained to claim for this great and solemn assurance of Christ a much deeper significance than is allowed to it in the view presented above. We must hold, not in the interest of any doctrinal system, but as the conclusion to which a natural exegesis of the passage leads, that it is meant to assure the genuine believer of his certain and ultimate safety, not only as against external foes, but as against his weaker and worse self through which only these foes can work his ruin.

It is the assurance to him of absolute safety, but it must not be overlooked that this safety is grounded on the power of God, is ascribed to God’s hold of him, rather than to his hold of God. We speak of the perseverance of the saints. This passage of Scripture and others of the same tenor would lead us to speak rather of their preservation. They “are kept by the power of God unto salvation”. They

are safe, they cannot perish, because they are in God's hand and "no one is able to pluck them out" thereof. This, accordingly, is a side of the agency of God in the sphere of redemption which the Saviour's personal teaching lifted into view.

(f) The care of God is represented as extending to their minutest interests: "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matt. x. 30)—as with God nothing is beyond His power. For "with God all things are possible" (Matt. xix. 26); so as regards the interests of true disciples, none is beneath His notice.

IV.—IT ONLY REMAINS TO ADD, THE PERFECTIONS AND AGENCY OF GOD, AS THUS UNFOLDED, ARE FULLY AND IMMEDIATELY KNOWN TO CHRIST, AND TO CHRIST ONLY, AND THEY ARE AT THE SAME TIME FAITHFULLY MIRRORED IN HIM.

In support of the first part of this statement it is only necessary to adduce the words, "Neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son," or the corresponding words in Luke x. 22, "No man knoweth who" or *what*, as there seems fair grammatical reason for rendering the term, "the Father is but the Son" (Matt. xi. 27). It is scarcely necessary to point out the value of these passages as supplying an important link between the synoptical gospels and that of John. They contain in substance the doctrine respecting the unique and essential relationship between the Father and the Son, which is unfolded so fully in the fourth gospel. In them, as is obvious, the Saviour lays claim to an exclusive or an absolute knowledge of the Father, a knowledge possessed by no one else, not even by any of the prophets of His nation. We seem warranted in saying that His knowledge of the Father is original, not derivative, not

acquired even from sacred Scripture, and that it is immediate: "Not that any man hath seen the Father, save He which is of God, He hath seen the Father" (John vi. 46). The reference here, as both Meyer and Westcott claim, would seem to be to His pre-existent state, and to the knowledge of God possessed in virtue thereof. Thus viewed, there is additional propriety in the use of the term "seen". As distinguished from "heard," the term used in the previous verse, it is, moreover, well fitted to convey the idea of the immediateness of His knowledge of God. Many have heard God or heard of Him, One alone has seen Him. From this character of immediateness in the Saviour's knowledge of the Father, there results necessarily its completeness and its certainty.

In support of the second part of the statement it is sufficient to quote the words, "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father" (John xiv. 9); words which warrant us in saying, that only in so far as He is seen in Jesus Christ is God, the true God, known. Take in this point the striking words of Luther, with which we close this section: "This I have often said and now say it again, that when I am dead it may be thought of and men may learn to avoid all teachers as sent and driven of the devil who set up to talk and preach about God simple and sundered from Jesus Christ. If thou wouldst go straight to God and surely apprehend Him, so as to find in Him mercy and strength, never let thyself be persuaded to seek Him elsewhere than in the Lord Jesus Christ. In Christ begin thy art and study, in Him let it abide firm, and wherever else thy own reason and thinking or any other man's would lead thee, shut thine eyes and say, I must not, I will not know any other God than in my Lord Jesus Christ."

## CHAPTER III.

### THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

"THE greatest problems in the field of history centre in the Person and Life of Christ. Who He was, what He was and why He became to be it, are questions that have not lost and will not lose their interest for us and for all mankind. For the problems that centre in Jesus have this peculiarity : they are not individual but general, concern not a person but the world." It is thus Principal Fairbairn writes in the opening sentences of his book on *The Life of Christ*. Both the truth and the significance of the statement will be readily recognised. If the question, What is the nature of the Supreme Power which is over us in life ; what is God ? in some respects transcends in importance the questions surrounding the Saviour's person, these at least take the very next place. The whole view we are led to take of man and of human life may be said to be involved in the answer which they receive.

It has to be noticed, however, that the inquirer who does not yet stand on distinctively Christian ground, has to gather his answer to these questions from various considerations other than Christ's testimony respecting Himself. He is precluded, while still an unbeliever, from at once accepting this testimony ; that were so far to prejudge the question. We, on the other hand, to whom Christ is "the true and faithful witness," have simply to bring together His own words respecting His person and to

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ascertain their proper meaning. With one who is only an inquirer, not yet a believer in Christ, the view to be taken of His person is a matter of historical and other evidence. With us it is purely a matter of interpretation. To the Christian, Christ is simply what He declares Himself to be.

The teachings of the Saviour respecting Himself are found in a great variety of passages in all the gospels; though they are more numerous and more significant in that of the fourth Evangelist. They must be regarded as affirming :—

#### I.—HIS PERSONAL PRE-EXISTENCE.

It is not only individual statements which assert or imply this; the whole way in which Christ is spoken of as "sent into the world" (John iii. 17); as "given" (iii. 16); as "come down from heaven" (vi. 38); as "come from God" (viii. 42), is fitted to convey the impression of His pre-temporal existence. Perhaps it is possible, it is certainly not natural, to give a meaning to these and other like expressions consistent with the supposition that He to whom they are applied had an existence which dated only from His birth in Bethlehem. It is pleaded by those who take this view that similar or the same terms are applied in Scripture to persons to whom no one would think of assigning a pre-earthly existence. The Baptist, for example, is also spoken of as "a man sent from God" (John i. 6), and "He that heareth God's words" is said to be "of God" or from God (John viii. 47). It is forgotten, however, that these expressions are applied to Christ in connections entirely different from those in which they are applied to any other person—connections which give them a quite specific meaning. When, for example, it is said, "I came out from the Father, and am

come into the world ; again, I leave the world and go unto the Father" (John xvi. 28, R.V.), the parallel drawn between the coming and the going is such as directly suggests the fact of a heavenly existence with the Father, from which He comes, corresponding to that into which on His exaltation He passes. The difficulty which the passage offers to those who deny the personal pre-existence of Christ is well seen in the attempt of Beyschlag to meet it ; by resolving the existence out of which Christ comes into an existence (impersonal, of course) "in the heart of God," and by construing His departure from the world as "the passing into a divine unlimited form of existence" ; a strange rendering, certainly, of going to the Father. Even when we take the familiar statement in which, almost more than in any other single one, the gospel seems to be summed up, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16), the idea naturally suggested is that He, the gift of whom is that of a love unparalleledly great, has already been possessed of an actual existence with God the Father, been the object to Him of an absolutely unique affection. To make His pre-existence a purely ideal one is, if not to make the great declaration an unmeaning one, at least to impair its significance immeasurably.

But the pre-existence of the Saviour is a truth which is not only borne in upon us by the general tenor of many of the statements in the gospels respecting Him ; it seems to be explicitly affirmed in more than one of these.

There are at least three sayings of Christ which bear this character, and to which attention may now be called : (a) "What then if ye should behold the Son of Man ascending where He was before" (John vi. 62, R.V.). These words,

naturally understood, point to a prior existence in heaven, not necessarily of the Son of Man as such, but of Him who as the Son of Man had appeared on earth. The notion of an ideal, as distinguished from an actual, existence requires to be read into the passage; it can hardly with fairness be read out of it. The claim of Beyschlag that the reference must be to the Son of Man as such, that is, the man Christ Jesus, and that the explanation of the language employed here regarding Him is to be found in Daniel vii. 13, "where the Son of Man as such appears in the clouds of heaven before He descends to earth invested with power and glory," cannot be pronounced satisfactory. It looks indeed as if the author of it was not himself quite satisfied, for he hastens to give another meaning to the words in which it is just as difficult to acquiesce, *viz.*, "that the ideal man existed from eternity in God is the truth which He (the Saviour) grasped, and to which He gave concrete intellectual form" (Beyschlag, vol. i., p. 253). (b) "Before Abraham was, I am" (John viii. 58). These words come in to close the controversy of Christ with the Jews, occasioned by the great, as it appeared to them, extravagant claim which He had made in the words: "If a man keeps My saying, he shall never see death". That was a claim far beyond any which even Abraham, the most honoured of the race, had adduced. The question was at once on their lips, "Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead?" The answer virtually is, I am greater: "Abraham rejoiced to see My day and he saw it and was glad". The day is evidently that of Christ's appearance on earth, as the Saviour of mankind. The question whether the vision or prevision of this appearance of Abraham was during his earthly life and through the great promise made to him (Gen. xxii. 18), and its

incipient fulfilment in the birth of Isaac, or in his paradisaical state and through special disclosures made to him of the fact of Jesus' birth, is not relevant to the point under discussion and may therefore be left to the side. The statement is important here mainly as giving rise to another question, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham?" which led in turn to the profoundly significant saying before us, made with all solemnity: "Verily, verily, I say unto you before Abraham was I am"; more properly, before Abraham *became*, was born, I exist. It is thus a claim of absolute or eternal existence, that is, not so much existence anterior to time, as existence to which our time determinations have no application, which is made in these words. The contention for which Wendt argues at great length and with marked ability, that it is ideal and not real, not personal existence which is here designated, existence in the mind and thought of God, not in actual fact, is ruled out by the analogy in which it is set to the existence of Abraham, which was admittedly both real and personal. And indeed when the passage is closely examined, the view of Wendt and of the entire school to which he belongs encounters a still more serious difficulty in this, that the affirmation of a purely *ideal* pre-existence on Christ's part would have carried with it no answer to the question, in reply to which it was made, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham?" Accordingly we must regard the words spoken by the Saviour on this occasion as testifying to the consciousness of that personal pre-existence which the Church with nearly concurrent voice has claimed for Him. (c) The third passage which may be adduced here, as vindicating the existence of this consciousness in Jesus Christ, is found in John xvii. 5: "And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with

Thine ownself, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was". These words might be left without a single remark to bear their own simple but impressive testimony to the consciousness which the Saviour had at the moment when they were spoken of a prior state of glory from which He had come and to which He now contemplates returning, after having finished the work which the Father had given Him to do, but for the very different construction which has been put on them by able expositors, and is being put on them with greater persistence than ever in our own day. According to this construction, the terms, "the glory which I had with Thee before the world was," designate not a glory which had been actually enjoyed by Christ, but a glory designed for Him by God, "laid up for Him with God in heaven, as a reward destined for Him from eternity" (Wendt, vol. ii., p. 170). To this it seems sufficient to reply that, apart from all dogmatic preconceptions, this is neither a natural nor adequate construction to put upon the words used, and, even if grammatically possible, its truth is rendered in the highest degree improbable, in view of the fact that they are reported to us by an Evangelist who has himself represented that "Word" which "was made flesh" as "in the beginning" "with God"—thus assigning to Him a glory which was not prospective and ideal, but one retrospective and actual. The main objection which is taken to the ordinary view of the passage may be stated in the words of Beyschlag: "If this (the verse quoted) spoke of a glory not reserved in heaven for the perfected sons (?) of God, but really possessed by Him before His birth, and laid aside for a time to be resumed by Him, how could He ask it back and ask it as a reward for having glorified the Father on the earth?" To this, it seems enough to reply

that the return to glory with the Father which is contemplated in the Saviour's prayer is His return, not as the eternal, imincarnate Son, but as the incarnate Logos, the God-man, who has finished the work which the Father gave Him to do. He re-enters heaven, resumes His place by the Father's side in a new character, and on the basis of His completed work, and returning to glory with the Father thus, He can both speak of the return as the resuming of what He had laid aside, and ask for it as the reward of what He had done. The Epistle to the Philippians at least may be cited as a proof that there is no felt incompatibility between the two ideas, that of a prior existence in glory and that of subsequent exaltation to honour and power. The Apostle who has spoken of the Saviour as "being," that must mean in some pre-temporal or supra-mundane state, "in the form of God" (Phil. ii. 6), is not hindered from adding in the immediately succeeding context: "Wherefore," as the result and reward of His obedience unto death, "God also hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name" (Phil. ii. 9).

We have discussed this subject of the pre-existence of Christ at a length that may appear to some unnecessary. This opinion, however, will be entertained by those only who have either failed to realise the immense importance of the truth, or have taken into account the persistence and the ability with which it is being combated on all hands in our day. It is evident that it is a truth of the first moment to our Christian faith, as involving the whole question of the reality of the Incarnation and indeed virtually that of the supernatural character of the Saviour's person. If it is abandoned, we have in Jesus Christ at most the deification of the human, not the incarnation of the divine, man become

God, not, what the Church has steadfastly claimed, God become man. It is impossible, therefore, to view without apprehension the number of eminent men who, while not denying that the Christ of the Epistles had a personal existence which antedated His manifestation in the flesh, maintain that the idea of such a pre-existence is entirely foreign to the consciousness of Jesus as it is revealed in the gospels.

This conclusion, one can scarcely help thinking, is not based by those holding it entirely on exegetical considerations. It seems to be due, in part at least, to the difficulties which the doctrine of the incarnation presents to the human intellect, and the desire to escape them. These difficulties are admittedly great, though perhaps not greater than those which emerge when a purely humanitarian view is taken of the Saviour's person; but in any case no difficulties can justify our rejection of a truth for which there is adequate scriptural evidence, and such evidence we need not hesitate to say, notwithstanding the contrary view that has been taken of them, is supplied for the pre-existence of Jesus Christ in those sayings of His which have come under review; and indeed the evidence of this truth is not confined to them, it is forthcoming in the general tenor of His teaching respecting Himself. Even when we do not hear His direct testimony to His pre-existent glory, we overhear it. He who claims an absolute and exclusive knowledge of the Father, who speaks on all matters of highest moment with an authority which no one is permitted to question, who makes the acceptance or rejection of Himself the hinge on which the destiny of men turns, who presents Himself as the final Judge of mankind, cannot, we instinctively feel, have an existence which reaches no farther back than

Bethlehem, must have a being to which our time measures do not apply. In Him there is, there must be, the appearance of the Eternal in time.

II.—HIS TRUE AND PROPER HUMANITY.

Here attention requires to be directed closely to the expression which the Saviour so often applied to Himself, "the Son of Man". It occurs thirty-nine times in the synoptical gospels, ten times in that of John, being in all these instances used by Himself. The only instances in the New Testament of its employment by any other speaker than Jesus Himself occur in Acts vii. 56 and Revelation i. 13, xiv. 14, and in the two latter instances the allusion would seem to be rather to Daniel vii. 13 than to the use of the term in the gospels. The question then is, What is the force of the term so oft recurring on the lips of Jesus? It is possible to distinguish three answers which have been given to this question.

1. There is the view held by a numerous school, of which Beyschlag in his *New Testament Theology* may be regarded as one of the latest exponents, which looks on it simply as a designation of office, an equivalent to the Messiah, having as little direct bearing on the nature of Jesus as human, as that more familiar title, but having the advantage of expressing the Messianic claim in a kind of veiled way, a consideration which was felt to be important in the earlier stages of His ministry. Attention is called in this connection to the use of a similar expression in two prophetic passages, Ezekiel ii. 1, 3 and Daniel vii. 13. The latter is thought specially important: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a Son of Man, and he came even to the ancient of



days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom." It is claimed that this passage in Daniel had already before Christ's time come to be regarded as a Messianic one, and in consequence the term, Son of Man, or the Son of Man, had come to be equivalent to the term, the Messiah. And therefore that in adopting it and using it more frequently than any other, Jesus desired virtually to announce His Messiahship, *i.e.*, the consciousness that in Himself the promise made unto the Fathers was being fulfilled. Greater probability would be given to this view—a probability that would almost amount to certainty—if it could be shown that the parts of the Apocryphal book of Enoch, in which frequent use is made of the term in the Messianic sense, were earlier than the Christian era, but on this point much uncertainty exists.

There are two considerations which throw doubt at least on the view which would make the term, the Son of Man, as used by Jesus, simply the equivalent of the term, the Messiah. First, the vision in Daniel does not bring before the prophet *the* Son of Man, but "one like a Son of Man". The idea would appear to be simply that of the human appearance of the being presented in vision, in contrast with the brute forms—the winged lion, the bear, the leopard and the beast with ten horns—under which the forces of the world-kingsdoms were symbolised. All that can be accepted as certain here is, that the phraseology in Daniel must have exercised some influence on the later apocalyptic writings. It cannot be certainly stated that it is the actual origin of Christ's application of the term to Himself, and still less that, in selecting the name as His own in preference to all others, He simply designed to designate Himself as

the Messiah, without any reference to His participation in our human nature. Second, it seems to be very generally agreed that Jesus in the early period of His ministry rather avoided than otherwise the proclamation of Himself as the Messiah. As Godet remarks, "He uses circumlocutions of every kind to express His Messianic functions but never the term itself". It would be strange, then, and inconsistent with His general course of action, to suppose Him adopting almost at the commencement of His ministry and using on all occasions a term which was at the time generally regarded as an appellation of the Messiah. Indeed His constant use of it, in view of the reserve which for a time at least He maintained as to His claims to be the Christ, could only be understood on the supposition that it was not yet identified in the popular mind with the promised Deliverer. In any case it is difficult to acquiesce in the view that we have in the name, the Son of Man, simply an official title of the Messiah, "a veiled indication" as it has been termed "of the Messianic calling" of Jesus, and conveying no direct indication of the participation in our human nature by Him who bears it. This is after all the important question, not, in what character, official or personal, does Jesus bear the name, but what does it connote, what idea did Jesus seek to convey regarding Himself in His use of the term. According to Beyschlag, "the one most essential, but also the most certain is, that in calling Himself the Son of Man, He knew Himself to be that man who bears in Himself the power of the kingdom of heaven in which the dominion of God and communion with God came down from heaven to earth" (Beyschlag, vol. i., p. 67). According to this view any reference to His humanity is either absent from the term or is relegated to a subordinate and uncertain place.

2. A second view is that according to which the term the Son of Man designates the union of the Messianic dignity with the lowliness of human nature (Wendt), or, according to which it denotes the real humanity of Christ, with special reference to His susceptibility to human suffering and His sharing in it (Matt. viii. 20), to His sympathetic character and the power which in accordance therewith He possesses to forgive sin, and to interpret the Sabbath law (Matt. ix. 6; xii. 8), and lastly to His attainment of glory through suffering (Matt. xvi. 27; xxvi. 64). This latter is in the main the view taken by Dr. Bruce in *The Kingdom of God*. One may readily admit that, as a statement of the significance of the term, it is true as far as it goes, the only question will be whether it goes far enough. The possession of a true humanity by Jesus Christ, His participation in all, sin excepted, which belongs to the race, is not only involved in the designation, but must have been meant to be conveyed by it. Even Beyschlag has to say, "the human and not Divine personality of the Son of Man lies in the ineffaceable significance of the expression itself" (Beyschlag, vol. i., p. 241). The name is justified by the fact that He was not only like a son of man, but that He was a son of man, or rather, the Son of Man; and just at this point the weakness of the view before us comes to light. It leaves what after all is most distinctive in the expression, the definite article, unexplained, as well as the great frequency, one might almost say the constancy, with which it was employed by the Saviour. For there seems no answer to the objection, that, if the term was designed simply to express the possession of a true human nature by Jesus, this was a fact which no one was likely to doubt, and of which therefore no assurance needed to be given.

Accordingly we must have recourse, as a very large number of thoughtful inquirers have had, to a third view.

3. According to this view, the designation "the Son of Man," while no doubt belonging to Him as the Messiah denotes, or rather connotes, the Saviour's possession of humanity after a unique and peculiar manner. This peculiarity has been variously understood. By some (Schultze) it has been sought in a higher Divine nature, which constituted the deepest essence of this Son of Man; by others (Weiss) it has been placed in His unique calling as the Redeemer of mankind. The explanation of the term would be found according to the latter view in the fact that Christ is not only a son of man, one among others, but that He has as man and for man a work to do completely exceptional, all His own; He presents Himself therefore as the Son of Man, and this all the more readily that the expression was one with which the apocalyptic literature in Scripture had made the minds of the Jewish people familiar. Even this view, however, does not appear to bring out the whole significance of the term which by its very form appears to set the humanity of Christ in a unique relationship to the race at large; He alone and by Himself sums up its perfections, represents its true ideal. In Jesus Christ there is nothing local or sectional. Even while a son of Abraham, "of the seed of David," and educated in a Jewish home, He rises above all national peculiarities, and above all the peculiarities of His time, as well as of His race. He belongs equally to all the centuries and to all races. What has been affirmed of His mystical body, the Church holds true in an important sense of His person. "There is neither Jew nor Greek . . . there is neither male nor female." One need not hesitate to apply the latter

part of the statement to Him as well as the former, and to maintain, what it has been one of the errors of the Church of Rome to forget, that the characteristic distinctions of sex disappear in Jesus Christ, that there is found in Him the tenderness of woman, not less than the strength of man. "He is," says Liddon, "the archetypal man in whose presence distinctions of race, intervals of ages, types of civilisation, degrees of mental culture, are as nothing." It is open, of course, to those men who would admit all this to be true of the Saviour's humanity to maintain notwithstanding that there is no reference to it in the name so often found upon His lips. All such explanations of the term, the Son of Man, have been characterised "as ingenious theories, too far fetched to commend themselves to approval". There seems good ground, nevertheless, for the opinion that the use of this designation by Christ finds its only adequate explanation in the unique relation in which He stands to the race, in whose nature He appeared. If this is so, then through the very name in which His equality of condition with us as men is involved, His absolute superiority over all others, His headship of the race is virtually asserted.

Passing now from the consideration of the meaning of the name, attention may be called in a sentence or two to the connection in which it stands in one or two passages, and to the meaning which they accordingly bear, for example, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head" (Matt. viii. 20). The words involve, and may well have been meant to signalise, an impressive contrast between the unique dignity of the speaker, as the Son of Man, and His experience of privation in a form in which it is not ordinarily

endured even by the very poor. "The Son of Man came eating and drinking" (Matt. xi. 19). The main object of the Saviour in this statement is, doubtless, to contrast His freer mode of life with the ascetic mode followed by the Baptist; there underlies it, however, the presupposition that He is, in respect of physical being, entirely one with us, His body needing to be sustained by food and drink as does ours. Again, "Is not this the carpenter, the Son of Mary?" (Mark vi. 3). The words are indeed spoken about Christ, rather than to Him, but they are virtually accepted by Him in verse 4. They thus attest His submission to the requirement of labour, as another feature in the earthly experience of the Saviour, one with which religious thought in all ages seems to have been slow to make earnest. Has the forgetfulness of it not something to do with the alienation to so large an extent of the labouring and the mechanical class from the Christian Church. "And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also because He is the Son of Man, or (marginal reading in the Revised Version) a Son of Man" (John v. 27). If the absence of the article here be regarded as significant, and the statement be read as the original almost seems to demand, as either a son of man, or, son of man, then its force would seem to be that the prerogative of judgment is directly connected with the possession of human nature by Christ. In this it is not implied that it is not an essential part of His Messianic functions, but it is still further implied that it is a function which belongs to the Messiah as human. Various views have been taken of the connection between the possession of humanity by Christ and His exercise of judgment. The explanation of Lange is: "because as a son of man, He can sympathise

with our weakness"; of Lücke, "because He is the Messiah, and judgment essentially belongs to the Messiah". Neither of these explanations can be regarded as satisfactory. The ability to sympathise with human weakness, even if in contrariety to Psalm ciii. 13, 14, we had to restrict it to the Redeemer, scarcely appears to be the quality which one would expect to find singled out as the ground for the delegation of the prerogative of judgment to Christ. The objection to the second view is that wherever in the gospels the term "Son of Man" is used to designate the Messiah, both words have the article; while in the passage under review neither word has it. Accordingly it must be maintained, that it is the human nature, rather than the official character of the Saviour, which is here designated. Regarding this as settled, the most natural explanation of the statement made would seem to be, that by assuming the human form, and in that form embodying and exemplifying before men's eyes the divine character and the divine claims, proffering to men life and demanding of men faith, Jesus Christ in the very act of appearing as Son of Man compels men by their attitude towards Him to reveal their real character, thus separates them into two classes, in effect judges them. And so the judgment is not simply a future one. It is one here and now, and it is inseparably connected with His manifestation in the flesh. The human Christ is the touchstone for all. Men cannot come into His presence and not be judged. By Him, as had been said, "the thoughts of many hearts" are "revealed" (Luke ii. 35). The statements: "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins" (Matt. ix. 6), and "The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath day" (Matt. xii. 8), will be more appropriately considered in

other chapters. We take in here only one other class of texts; those which lift into view the coming glory of Christ, under the designation of the Son of Man; as Matthew xix. 28; xxiv. 30; xxv. 31, and xxvi. 64: "Hereafter," better henceforth, "shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven". In this connection, the designation seems all the more significant, because of the contrast which it suggests between the present humiliation and the impending glory of the Saviour, if indeed it is not here selected on purpose to signalise this contrast.

Such then is the Saviour's testimony to His true and unique humanity, and such are some of the instructive connections in which it is set in the gospels.

### III.—HIS TRUE AND PROPER GODHEAD.

It is unnecessary to signalise the importance of this characteristic of the Saviour's person, and of the line of proof by which its existence is established. The truth is instinctively felt to be bound up with our dearest hopes as Christians. The questions which claim answer are such as these: Did Christ lay claim either by express words, or by implication, or in both these ways to the possession of a nature higher than the human, or strictly and essentially divine? Is the evidence of this confined to the fourth gospel, or is it found, though less fully, in His words as reported in the synoptical gospels? On the supposition that such a claim on Christ's part is established, how is the divine element in His person related to the human, and how is the unity of the person preserved? The answer to the former questions may be properly sought in the words and acts of Christ recorded in the gospels.



The answer to the latter must be more or less a matter of speculation, though to ward off fatal errors the Church has felt itself constrained to formulate certain doctrines on the subject. Coming to the line of proof that the Saviour claims true and proper Godhead, attention is called to the following points :—

1. His pre-existence, as already established. Now it is quite true that pre-existence is not Deity. The ancient Arians admitted the pre-existence of Jesus Christ, as the highest of created beings, the instrument by whom the Supreme God made the worlds, while denying His true and proper Godhead. But the incarnation of a pre-existent being, not divine, possessing the bounded personality of a mere creature, however high, raises so grave difficulties for thought that it is not surprising that in our day the Arian position has been very generally abandoned in favour of the Socinian, by those who are not prepared to admit the Catholic doctrine on the subject. Of modern theologians, nearly all who impugn this doctrine, alike those who recognise a supernatural element in the Saviour, and those who take a purely naturalistic view of His person, deny His pre-existence, make His personal existence to commence with His birth in Bethlehem. Accordingly if the opposite can be shown to be true, if in the recorded sayings of Christ there are "flashes of revelation out of the depths of His own Eternal Consciousness," then we have a strong presumption in favour of His Godhead; at least it will be impossible to maintain the purely humanitarian conception of Him, which more than ever in our day seems to be regarded as the only possible alternative. The two truths, His personal pre-existence and His essential oneness with the Father, certainly support each other.

2. The peculiar character of some of these statements in which His pre-existence is either taught or implied. On the face of them they are seen to go much farther than the mere affirmation of this truth. Attention has already been called to one of the most striking of these, "Before Abraham was I am" (John viii. 58); and it has been seen that the statement, understood in any natural sense, not only claimed for the speaker an existence prior to Abraham but stamps His existence as of the absolute or uncreated kind. In it, as Canon Liddon has said, "He unveils a consciousness of Eternal Being. He speaks as One on whom time has no effect and for whom it has no meaning. He is the eternal Now" (*Bampton Lecture*, p. 188). If this is not yet a direct and explicit assertion of His Godhead, it seems intelligible only on the supposition of that Godhead. To the same class belongs the statement, "No man hath ascended up to heaven but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven" (John iii. 13). These words bear testimony like the similar words in John vi. 62 to the pre-existence of Christ. He speaks of Himself as "He that came down from heaven". The statement is quoted here, however, because of the last words in it, which if genuine, as the preponderance of evidence seems to show them to be, go beyond the mere pre-existence of Christ. They suggest a view of His person which implies the presence in it of a mysterious transcendent element. He is "the Son of Man which is in heaven". The object of the statement as a whole is to explain to Nicodemus how He and He only is able to testify, that is to bear witness on the basis of personal knowledge, of "heavenly things". It is because, while with men on earth, to which He has descended, heaven is His proper abode, His home; in

which, even as He spoke, He had a real presence. The presence must be conceived indeed as spiritual not local, but it must be at the same time real. There is, it must be admitted, an air of mystery about the words, which renders a definite determination of their meaning difficult, but which on that very account leads us to look for the presence of other than merely creaturely perfections, however high, in the being who employs them regarding Himself.

We ask attention under this head to one other statement : " I proceeded forth and came from God " ; in the Revised Version, " I came forth and am come from God " (John viii. 42). The claim is, that these words, while implying the pre-existence of the speaker, at the same time express His original relationship to God in such terms as seem consistent only with His true and proper Godhead. To vindicate this claim it will be necessary to look closely into the exact terms of the statement and also at the connection in which it was made. The words were spoken to disprove the claim which the Jews who were addressed made to be children of God. " Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love Me : for I came forth and am come from God ; for neither have I come of Myself, but He sent Me ". It will be observed that all which the Saviour required to claim for Himself to justify His statement respecting those addressed was a mission from God, or, along with this, oneness of character with Him. His words, however, when closely viewed, are seen to go far in advance of this. The preposition employed is not *παρά*, " from the side of " (as in John xvi. 27 ; xvii. 8), implying a state of personal fellowship with God in which He had pre-existed ; nor *ἀπό*, " away from," used in John xiii. 3 ; xvi. 30, of the separation involved in the incarnation under one

aspect of it; but *ἐκ*, "out of," denoting origin or source. The literal rendering is thus, "I proceeded out of God". The expression, therefore, must be taken, according to an interpreter so free from strong theological prepossessions as Meyer, in a metaphysical rather than in a local or even ethical sense, and must be regarded as denoting "the proceeding forth from that essential pre-human fellowship with God which was His as the Son of God, and which took place through the incarnation". The same view of it is taken by Bishop Westcott, who remarks: "The words can only be interpreted of the true Divinity of the Son, of which the Father is the source and fountain". It is needless to say that this position is strongly contested by, among others, both Wendt and Beyschlag, and on substantially the same grounds. The language of the Saviour, it is pleaded, is metaphorical. The "proceeding from God" is not to be understood in respect of essential being, but in respect of ethical character. To be "of God" and not of the world (John xvii. 14) "designates solely the fundamental Godward direction of the heart and life, in contrast with the worldly. The 'coming from heaven,' the 'having proceeded from the Father' have a larger meaning, but the direction is the same; they trace back the heavenly divine character which Jesus shared with others, but which He knew He possessed before others, to its origin in a special heavenly or divine descent," that is, "to an original inborn harmony with God" (Beyschlag, vol. i., pp. 257, 258). This view of the words, it is said, is corroborated at once by the contrast which in the same chapter Christ draws between the unbelieving Jews, as "of their father the devil," and elsewhere as "of the world," and Himself as "not of the world" but "as of God," and by the analogy between Him-

self and His believing followers as both "of God"; though in His case in a unique sense, or rather degree, for to this it comes, if all reference to essential being or nature, as distinguished from character, is excluded. To this reasoning, which, we must admit, possesses a certain degree of plausibility, it is sufficient to reply that it carries the analogy between Christ and His believing followers farther than the words of Scripture warrant. It is no doubt said of believers that they are "of God" (John viii. 47), that they are "born of God" (John i., 13), that is, they have a life, a character which has its source in God, which He has imparted, and which is, therefore, kindred with Him; but it is nowhere said that they proceed from or out of God and are come. That is said of the Son only (John viii. 42; xvi. 28), and the language is such as, when taken in its natural sense, almost compels us to think the primary reference to be to nature or being and not to character, and thus bespeaks a difference, not in degree only, but in nature, between His filiation and that of all others. In any case, even if we should stop short of weighting the expression with the full burden of the great truth of the Divinity of our Lord, the admission must be made that it denotes a relationship absolutely unique in which the Speaker claims to stand to God.

The name "the Son of God" or simply "the Son" under which the Saviour either speaks of Himself, or allows, rather encourages, others to speak of Him. To the former class belong John iii. 16, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son," etc., in all likelihood the words of Christ, though they have been regarded by some as those of the Evangelist (Matt. xxvi. 63, 64), where in answer to the adjuration of the High Priest, inquiring whether He were the Son of God, Jesus replied, "Thou hast said,"

a Rabbinical form of affirmation ; John ix. 35, 37, where in reply to the interrogation of the man whose eyes had been opened, and who had borne so brave witness on His behalf, the Saviour makes the most direct statement of His Divine Sonship. Here belong also those many passages in which He speaks of Himself as "the Son" (Matt. xi. 27 ; John v. 19, 20 ; iii. 35). To the latter class belong the words of Nathanael, " Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God " (John i. 49) ; and the words of Peter, " Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God " (Matt. xvi. 16) ; words which were not only accepted by Jesus, but which were made the ground by Him of most emphatic commendation, or benediction rather : " Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jonah : for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven ".

Now in seeking to determine in the light of the Saviour's own teachings the nature of His person, it is all-important to settle in what sense He uses and accepts as applied to Himself this appellation. The question is not, what meaning the term is capable of bearing, nor what meaning may have been attached to it by others, who used it or who heard it used, but in what signification did He Himself employ it.

We may at once rule out the meaning of kinship with God, in virtue of creation in His image or likeness. In that case, the term would be one universally applicable to members of the human family. But the sonship which Christ claims is on the face of it original and distinctive, one which belongs properly and of right to Himself only and which comes to others in some faint counterpart, only through Him and as of grace (John i. 12). It has often been observed that He never places Himself alongside of His disciples, so as to say with them " Our Father ". On one occasion at

least He made use, we must believe on purpose, of a quite distinct mode of speech, "I ascend unto My Father and your Father" (John xx. 17), thus implying that the designation belongs to Him in a sense absolutely unique.

It is not necessary to maintain that the term "the Son of God" as applied to Christ has the same meaning wherever it occurs in the gospels, in whatever connection, and by whomsoever employed, whether by Christ of Himself or by others of Him. The opposite may even be shown to be true. There seems good reason for believing that it was used by some simply as a Messianic title of dignity, one which on the basis of such Old Testament passages as 2 Samuel vii. 14; Psalms ii. 7; lxxxix. 27, came to be regarded as properly belonging to the Messiah. It was almost certainly in this sense that the term was employed by Nathanael when, addressing Jesus, he said, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel" (John i. 49). It seems altogether improbable that, on the occasion of his first interview with Jesus, Nathanael should have had any idea of His proper and essential Godhead, on the supposition that the words employed are capable of expressing that Godhead. In much the same light we must regard the use of the term by Martha when, in reply to the challenge of Christ, she said, "Yea, Lord, I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world" (John xi. 27). On the occasion, too, on which it was employed by the high priest, "I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God" (Matt. xxvi. 63), it has the appearance of being used as a synonym of "the Christ"; though it is possible, nay probable, that it was appended in this last case as involving that claim to equality with God which, as the

narrative shows, was so extremely offensive to the Jewish people, and on the ground of which, indeed, He was condemned. There is more doubt as to the sense in which the term was employed by Peter in his great confession : "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. xvi. 16). That confession had respect in the first place to the Messiahship of Jesus. It was primarily the explicit recognition by the Apostle of Jesus as the Christ ; but it was the recognition of Him also, according to the then prevailing view, as "the Son of God". It might be too much to claim for the Apostle at this stage of his experience a full insight into the deeper meaning of which the term is supposed to be susceptible, but he may well have employed it to express his sense of a peculiar, a unique relationship in which the object of his confession stood to God, his sense of the presence in Him of some superhuman element. The emphatic benediction pronounced on him by the Lord becomes in that case more intelligible.

But while it may be regarded, when employed by others, very largely as a term of honour, belonging to the Messiah, it is impossible to stop with this view of its force when used by Himself. The question therefore still remains, in what sense did the Saviour Himself employ it, in what character did He mean to present Himself to His hearers, when He spoke of Himself as "the Son of God" or, as so often, simply as "the Son"? It is admitted on all hands that at least He claimed thereby to stand in a peculiar personal relation to God ; one in which none before Him had ever stood. But it is contended by some, that this peculiar relationship consisted in nothing more than in His possession in a pre-eminent degree of God-like qualities and in His being the object in an unequalled measure of the Divine love ; and



especially that it has no reference expressed or implied to the possession by Him of a Divine nature in the metaphysical as distinguished from the moral sense of that term. This view, while not originating with them, has been set forth and maintained with great confidence in recent times by Wendt and Beyschlag. According to both of these theologians, the Sonship of Jesus consists simply in His perfect likeness to God in character, in His utter devotion to the will of God, and, what must ever accompany this, in His possession, in a measure all His own, of the love of God. He knows Himself to be the Son of the Father, because He always does the things that are pleasing to Him, because He has no will, desires to have none, separate from His, and because He has unbroken fellowship with Him, is the object in a pre-eminent degree of His love. His Sonship differs, therefore, in degree only, not in kind, from that attainable by others. They too may become like God, and be loved of Him, but in Christ's case the likeness to God and the fellowship of love with God are of an absolute character. His Sonship therefore is unique, even as it is original. He is "the Son," never joining in a common "Our Father" even with those who are sons in and through Him.

Now it is not necessary, in opposing this contention, to deny that the term involves on Christ's part moral resemblance to God, special love on the part of God, and intimate fellowship with Him. One may even admit that in many of the connections in which the term is used, this rather than any metaphysical quality of being is what it suggests. Whether it involves or does not involve oneness of nature with God, it does certainly involve, or rather it does not so much involve as express, oneness of character, oneness of

will and affection. In very many of the passages, indeed, in which the Saviour speaks of Himself as the Son, this—the moral rather than the metaphysical quality—seems to be the prominent thought; and nothing but injury first to the truth and then to the life which the truth is meant to sustain, can result from overlooking it, or from failing to give to the moral element the same prominence in our mind which it seems to obtain in the Saviour's statements.

The passages are too numerous to quote in which the primary thought connected with the term, "the Son of God," or "the Son" simply, appears to be that of moral likeness to God, rather than that of essential oneness; but take one or two. (a) Take the passage in which He deals with the charge of blasphemy brought against Him, because He had said, "I am the Son of God". "If," He says in vindication of His claim, "I do not the works of My Father believe Me not. But if I do them, though ye believe not Me, believe the works: that ye may know and believe (understand, R.V.) that the Father is in Me, and I in Him" (John x. 34-37). The appeal, it will be observed, when the question of the reality of His Sonship is at stake, is to that which is directly moral, to the works which He does, "the works of My Father"; works wrought in God, works in every way worthy of God, not so much because of their miraculous character, as because of their blinding majesty and grace. Of course this does not necessarily mean that His Sonship is one directly constituted, as we have seen has been claimed, by His moral resemblance to God, but it is significant that it is directly attested not so much by the miraculous or the supernatural, as by the moral character of His works. (b) Take the statement, "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do, for

what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise" (John v. 19). The statement was made in connection with a work of healing on the Sabbath day, the performance of which on that day had given great offence to the Jews. Now it is true that the words quoted have been taken by Liddon, Westcott and even Meyer to signify that the Son's being is so bound up with that of the Father that independent and still more divergent action is ruled out as a natural impossibility. But however the essential oneness of the Son and the Father may be involved in the passage regarded as a whole from which the statement is taken, and especially in the declaration, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work," as we cannot but believe it to be, we seem to be shut up by its very terms, "The Son can do nothing of Himself" (*ὅφ' ἑαυτοῦ*), nothing, that is, "but what He seeth the Father do," to regard the force of this particular statement to be, that the devotion of the Son—the personal historical Christ then speaking—is so absolute, that He can work only in the line of the Father's working, as that is apprehended by Him from moment to moment. He can, just because of this supreme devotion to the will of the Father, this perfect moral oneness with God, have no separate activity or interest, no plans, no course of action of His own. The impossibility is thus a moral, not a metaphysical one.

This view finds strong support in the words of the thirtieth verse, where substantially the same statement is made: "I can of mine own self do nothing," but with this instructive addition, "As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just; because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father, which hath sent Me". The moral as distinguished from the metaphysical could scarcely be more distinctly expressed than in these words. It is still further corroborated by the

words in the twentieth verse : " For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth Him all things that Himself doeth". It behoves one to speak with reverence and diffidence on such a subject. But if the agreement of the working of the Son with that of the Father is directly due to their oneness of nature, if the Son can have no self-originated, no self-directed action, just because of His essential being as the Son, one does not readily perceive the need in order to this agreement of that continuous manifestation to the Son of the Father's line of working, by which it seems to be in part explained. On the other hand, all is at once plain and profoundly impressive if the Saviour be regarded as presenting Himself here as One whose sympathy with the mind of the Father is so perfect that He cannot but act in accordance with it, whose devotion to God is so absolute, that He can have no course of action of His own.

The main question here, however, has still to be faced. That question is not whether the term " the Son of God " or " the Son " is not sometimes used by Christ in connections in which the prominent thought suggested is that of moral oneness or of intimate fellowship with the Father, but whether this exhausts the meaning of the term, whether it is a meaning strong enough to bear the full strain of the argument in all the passages in which it occurs. It is evident that this must be maintained by all who adopt the purely humanitarian view of the Saviour's person ; and in point of fact it has been maintained by some whose general theological position is much higher than that of humanitarianism. Thus Weiss says : " It appears that all the attempts to import into this designation the dogmatic idea of a generation out of God, or of a metaphysical consubstantiality of essence with Him, are simply unhistorical ".

But notwithstanding this confident assertion, and coming too from such a quarter, it must be maintained that the designation "the Son" on Christ's lips, when viewed in the connections in which it is employed, connotes more than a unique degree of moral excellence, or a special closeness of fellowship with God. Now, it does not carry us very far in the determination of the main point at issue to discover what sense the word was understood to bear when applied to the Messiah in the Old Testament, or in what sense it was used by a Nathanael or a Martha when spoken of Jesus. Much therefore of what is urged by Wendt, Beyschlag and others of the same school of thought, on the general biblical meaning of the term, is aside from the point. It is surely readily conceivable that it may have had a depth of meaning for the consciousness of the Saviour which it was far from possessing for the ordinary Jewish mind, and that it may have been His design to express through it claims far in advance of those which they had been accustomed to associate with the word. We believe it can be shown that this was actually the case, that on Christ's lips, and in the connections in which He Himself used the designation, it implied the presence of a divine element in His person or being.

In support of this not much weight probably is to be attached to the circumstance, that it was so understood by His Jewish hearers, by whom He was regarded as claiming, by the use of the term, equality with God, and who based thereon the charge of blasphemy on which He was eventually condemned. By the equality with God, which appeared to be involved in the use of the term "My Father," in the exclusive sense in which the Saviour used it, or in the designation of Himself by the term "the Son of God," they

may well have meant equality of a moral rather than of a metaphysical kind—equality in character and prerogative rather than in essential being. This would have been quite sufficient to ground the charge of blasphemy according to the then use of the term, and indeed the reply of the Saviour to their accusation is most readily understood when this is regarded as their view of the implication of the name under which He spoke of Himself. “If He called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken ; Say ye of Him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest ; because I said, I am the Son of God ?” (John x. 35, 36). In any case the misunderstanding of the Saviour's language by the Jews was so frequent that one could not attach much weight to the circumstance, even if it could be established, that they saw in His claim to be “the Son of God” the claim to equality in nature, as in moral perfection, with God.

Coming now, however, directly to the question as to whether the term “the Son of God” as used by Christ of Himself does or does not involve something more than His perfect moral likeness to God and His being the object of a special degree of love on the part of God, we are struck at once, when we look at the terms under which His sonship is spoken of, with the fact that it is of an altogether unique kind ; that it stands absolutely alone. If others also of the human family are sons of God they are sons of a different rank. His sonship is original ; theirs is derivative. Sonship is fundamental to His being. May we not say that it is to Him what Fatherhood is to God. It is accessory to the being of others. He is ever “the Son” ; they become sons, and this in and through Him. It is not enough to say that He is “the Son of God” in a pre-eminent sense. It must

be added that in the sense in which He is "the Son of God" there is no other. He is "the Son," "the only-begotten Son"; the Son who alone knows the Father, whom the Father alone knows, to see whom is to see the Father. So far then from its being true, as claimed by Wendt that no "character different in principle is to be ascribed to His paternal and filial relationship to God from that attaching to the members of His Kingdom," the very opposite would seem to be the case. The prerogatives which He asserts, the nature of the work which is assigned Him, the worship which He claims, the very epithets by which His Sonship is characterised, all unite to make His place exclusive, to distinguish His Sonship not in degree only, but in character, from that which belongs to every other. The impression which the gospel narratives, as a whole, leave on the unprejudiced mind is, that in the sense in which Jesus Christ is Son, there is one only and there can be no other. But if this impression is well founded, this circumstance alone goes far to establish the contention that His Sonship is one grounded in some immanent distinction within the Divine nature, that while signalised, it is not constituted, by His absolute likeness to God and the incomparable love with which He is regarded by God. For if it had no transcendental ground whatever, if it were actually constituted, as claimed by some distinguished scholars in our day, simply by the unique degree of moral excellence which He exhibited, by the absolute accordance of His will with the will of God, and His perfect knowledge of the character of God, then it is not inconceivable that a like Sonship may come to others also; there is nothing on this supposition in the nature of the case to render it impossible that God should send into the world another

possessing the same perfect knowledge of Himself, and the same absolute devotion to His will. But surely this is a possibility which is not so much foreign to the whole tenor of the Saviour's teaching regarding Himself as it is absolutely inconsistent therewith.

Passing from this consideration we call attention to the fact that the Sonship of the Saviour is spoken of in terms, and is adduced in connections, which compel us to regard it as involving something more than ethical oneness with God. Take the statement: "I and the Father are one" (John x. 30, R.V.). The question here is not, What could these words mean? Of what signification are they grammatically susceptible? but what must their force be, in order to sustain the truth, in support of which they are adduced? That truth is the absolute security of the disciples of Jesus Christ, designated in the context His sheep, as over against all opposing forces. Now it may be fairly pleaded, in order that the oneness of the Son with the Father should carry with it the guarantee of this security, it is essential that it should not be simply ethical, but what may be termed dynamic, oneness of power, and not of will only. This is really what it is represented as being. The hand of the Son, in which believers are held, and out of which none shall pluck them, is according to the way in which the matter is put, in effect the hand of the Father. The power of the Son and of the Father in ensuring the final safety of believers is identified in such a way as to imply something more than delegation of authority. It finds its most natural, if not, indeed, its necessary explanation in community of nature. While it may be too much, therefore, to find in the words of the thirtieth verse the distinct affirmation of the



Son's identity of substance with the Father, it is not going too far to say that this appears to be the natural presupposition underlying the Saviour's whole statement in the passage. This is the view which has been taken of it by Liddon, Meyer, Godet and others. The words of Liddon are: "The power of the Son which shields the redeemed from the foes of their salvation is the very power of the Father, and this identity of power is itself the outflow and the manifestation of a oneness in nature". The statement of Godet is not less explicit: "The thought of Jesus rises still higher, even to the notion of a unity of nature, whence arises unity of will, power and property".

The Saviour's words, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work" (John v. 17), have been regarded as carrying with them a similar implication; with this difference only, that in the view of some the implication is even more unquestionable. Godet, indeed, is an exception. According to him "this proposition expresses the absolute, immediate and permanent fidelity with which the Son enters every instant into the Father's work. It is the profoundest law of His being which Jesus here reveals in this concise and original form." On this view the statement keeps the purely ethical line, and any inference therefrom to the essential unity of the Son and the Father would be unwarranted, or, at least, of doubtful force. But surely something more is implied here than simple devotion to the Father's will. Taken in their natural sense, the words "My father worketh hitherto and I work," especially when spoken as a justification of His acting as He did on the Sabbath day, assert the claim that He was acting in God and God in Him, that He was in so intimate a sense one with the Father that His working, whether on the week day or on the Sabbath, was

really the working of the Father. "His words as a justification of working miracles on the Sabbath day have validity only on the supposition that His will and His power are on the level of the power and the will of the Father" (Liddon). Dr. Dodds says: "From this statement the Jews concluded that He made Himself equal with God. And they were justified in so concluding. It is only on this understanding of His words that the defence of Jesus was relevant."

Take again the words: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John xiv. 9). The main reference here, the direct one, no doubt, is to character, not to absolute or essential being; but even so, what is the implication? The context forbids us to rest with the simple idea of resemblance, such as may be sometimes found to exist in so perfect a degree in a child to its father, that we are led to say, he who has seen the one has seen the other. Even in that case the assertion would be a very singular one on any other supposition than that Jesus is Divine. In the mere creature, for that is the other alternative, there is necessarily ever something partial. One quality belongs to one, another to another. No one can imagine all the perfections of God. The likeness must fail at some point or another. But the words which immediately follow show us that Christ is not speaking of mere likeness, however complete, but of such a presence of the Father in Him and of Him in the Father, as made His voice for them and for us the voice of God, His will the will of God, His hand the hand of God. "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me" (John xiv. 10). This is something more than resemblance, however complete. He forms with the Father such a unity, that what the one does is also the immediate act of the other, that he who sees the one sees the other also. Who does

not feel that there is something more here than that presence of God which may be said to exist in every regenerate man; and not only something more, but something specifically different? How can it be maintained in consistency with such a statement that Christ's Sonship does not differ in principle from that of all others who are sons? The distinction becomes more than ever undeniable when we consider His words in the twenty-third verse: "If a man love Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him". Who is this that associates Himself with God in making good a common presence within the soul that loves and obeys Him, that represents His presence with and in men as taking rank beside that of God Himself? He who can rightfully make such a claim on behalf of Himself is no mere man, however gifted and holy. It is the signal not of dignity of office simply, but of transcendence in nature.

Take once more the words, "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him" (Matt. xi. 27). The same weighty statement is given in Luke x. 22, with a slight change in form, but with a meaning substantially the same: "No man knoweth who," better "what," "the Son is, but the Father; and who," or what, "the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him." The statement is one of the very highest significance. It not only establishes the fact that the use of the name "the Son" is not limited to the Christ of St. John's Gospel, in which admittedly it occurs very much more frequently, it also clothes the person thus designated with prerogatives of the same lofty and exclusive character ascribed to Him in that gospel. What it affirms is a

knowledge of the Son by the Father, and of the Father by the Son, at once reciprocal and exclusive, and as it would appear in each case of the same absolute kind. The Son's knowledge of the Father, or of what the Father is, takes rank exactly with the Father's knowledge of the Son or of what the Son is. How difficult or impossible to reconcile such a fact with the view that we have in the one the living and true God, and in the other a creature simply, highly endowed indeed and uniquely loved, but only a creature, a human being whose existence is dated in time like that of others! Then it is important to notice that the exclusive and reciprocal knowledge which is affirmed on the part of the Father and the Son is the effect, not the cause, of the fatherhood and the filiation. This is the natural meaning of the language, "Jesus is not the *Son*, because He alone perfectly knows the Father, and is fully known only by Him, but He knows Him and is known by Him in this way only because He is *the Son*. In like manner God is not *the Father*, because He alone knows the Son and is known only by Him, but this double knowledge is the effect of that paternal relation which He sustains to the Son."

Accordingly with this passage in view, it is no longer possible to claim that the Christ of the synoptical gospels, and the Christ of the fourth gospel are altogether different persons. In reality, if the meaning taken of the passage is even approximately correct, the substance of all that is highest and most distinctive in the Johannine teaching respecting our Lord's person is contained in this statement supplied by the Evangelist, whom many regard as the earliest one of the four. At least it is as little possible to reconcile it with a purely humanitarian view of Christ as

any of the fuller statements made regarding Him in the Gospel of St. John.

Accordingly we come to the conclusion that, while the name, "the Son of God," as used in the gospels of Christ, does not always or necessarily imply the recognition of His possession of a Divine nature, while the opposite indeed is apparent in the application of the term to Him by one and another ; yet in terming Himself "the Son of God" or "the Son" simply, He did lay claim to a kind and degree of transcendence not consistent with His possession of a merely human personality, to a kinship with God different in character from that which obtains in the case of ordinary men, and such as becomes intelligible to us only when He is viewed as possessing in some way a community of nature with the Father, that is, as Divine.

At the same time, it seems necessary to add that in seeking to vindicate the Divinity of our Lord, as the gospels taken as a whole seem to require us to do, too much weight must not be attached to the mere term "the Son of God," or "the Son," under which He speaks of Himself and others speak of Him. It seems certain that positions have been taken up in this connection which can with great difficulty be maintained to-day. It is scarcely allowed to us to say that the name "the Son of God" marks Him out as unmistakably as Divine as the name "the Son of Man" marks Him out as human. Neither the history of the term antecedent to His appearance, nor its use in the gospels, will sustain this contention. The proof of His Divinity lies still more in the connections in which it is used and in the prerogatives which it grounds, than in the simple name itself ; and it lies most of all, not in any simple designation applied to Him, this or any other, but in His

unique personality as that comes to light both in word and act. The authority with which He speaks, settling all questions of truth and duty by His simple word, the imperious claims which He makes, enjoining on men—all men—to live for Him as for the very end of their being, the worship which He not only accepts but exacts, the final judgment of mankind which He is to exercise, not to speak of His absolute freedom from the consciousness of sin, these compel us to think of His personality as cast in another than human mould, as possessing qualities indistinguishable from those which are Divine.

3. This conclusion is confirmed in a striking way by the words found in John xx. 28 ; words not indeed of Jesus, but virtually endorsed by Him, "Thomas saith unto Him, my Lord and my God". It would seem hopeless to invalidate the testimony which this exclamation furnishes to the Divinity of our Lord. The attempt indeed has been made. On the one hand it has been said that the words were really addressed to God the Father, but the pronoun *αὐτῷ*, to Him, is conclusive against this view, if not also the expression "My Lord," which in this connection can only be regarded as applying to Jesus. On the other hand, it has been claimed that it was simply of the recognition of Himself by Thomas as risen from the dead that the Saviour expressed approval, and not of the terms applied to Him by that disciple in a moment of devout excitement. But surely this can be regarded as little better than an attempt to evade the testimony of the passage to an unwelcome truth. To the same effect is the testimony contained in the baptismal formula, "baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. xxviii. 19). The co-ordination

in the way of "Father, Son and Holy Ghost" would be strange indeed if these terms represented notions so diverse as those of God, and a human prophet and a sanctifying influence ; all the more when it is viewed in the light of the unity of the name, "baptising in or into, not the names, but the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost". The inference does not seem a doubtful one, "the name of the one God is, when written out full, a threefold name"—implying this therefore, the Son is Divine.

Even statements of the Saviour which at first sight appear to be inconsistent with His possession of a Divine nature, rather confirm it when more closely regarded. For example: "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark xiii. 32). These words, it will be observed, clearly distinguish the Son both from men and from angels; absolutely contrasting Him with both; not in respect of knowledge, but in respect of rank, of existence or being. It is the obvious implication of the passage, that He belongs neither to the angelic order, nor to that of the purely human. He transcends both. We can think of Him accordingly only as Divine, though for the purpose of our redemption He has laid aside in respect of use, if not also in respect of possession, the prerogative of omniscience which must have been His as the Word which was in the beginning with God and was God.

Taking all the statements of the Saviour, which have been now passed under review, into account, we cannot but regard Him as laying claim, more indeed by implication than by direct assertion to His possession of a Divine nature; to kinship with God, not in the purely ethical sense but in the properly metaphysical one; still less in

the sense in which man everywhere, as created in God's image, is kindred with Him, but in a sense altogether unique and exclusive. He and He alone is "the Son". Thus in His soul there was at once the consciousness of Himself as the possessor of a true and perfect humanity, and the consciousness of Himself as the Son of God, His only-begotten Son; or rather, His single consciousness embraced and held in solution the human element and the divine. Nor is it beyond our power to determine, on the basis of the Saviour's teaching, which element was the constitutive one. If we hold, as we seem compelled to do, His pre-existence, and His pre-existence not as an impersonal principle, but as a personal being, then the divine element must be regarded as the original, the constitutive one in His mysterious personality. It is true the order in which the one element and the other arose in the consciousness of the incarnate Word may have been a different one. His first experience may have been, as it would appear to us must have been, of the limitations of creature existence, thus of His kinship with man. How soon and in what manner He came to the consciousness of Himself as the Son of God, it were perhaps irreverent in us to inquire.

Before closing this subject, attention may be called to the importance which the Saviour evidently attached to the recognition of His Divine Sonship. It is visible in the urgency with which He demands this recognition. "Believe Me, that I am in the Father and the Father in Me" (John xiv. 11); and it is seen in the blessedness which He connects with it in the case of Peter, on the occasion of His great confession: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. xvi. 16); that is on the supposition that the terms "the Son of the living God" are used in



their full significance, and not as a mere synonym of "the Christ," "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven".

It is important likewise to notice in what manner the recognition of Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of God" was reached by this Apostle. It was not reached as a result of a direct announcement of the fact by the Saviour Himself, such as He made to the man whose eyes He had opened (John ix. 35-37), and such as He could readily have made to Peter and the other Apostles, did make, indeed, at a later period in His ministry, but it was attained as the result under Divine guidance of His own observation of the Saviour's character and course of action. His faith was not the echo of the Saviour's word, it was the impression produced by the Saviour's person. The Son of God lived before him, full of grace and truth, and the susceptible and observant disciple, taught of the Father, himself learned who and what He was. In reality all our most important attainments in knowledge, whether of things secular or things sacred, are made in a similar manner. But the method obtains pre-eminently in the sphere of the Divine and the spiritual. That conviction of the Divinity of the Saviour is ever the most penetrating and the most comforting which does not so much rest on isolated texts of Scripture as it is wrought by the observation of His person and character, and by the experience of His grace and saving power. However reached, it is scarcely necessary to say that the conviction is one of quite signal value, which enables us as we look on the person and lift our eyes to the throne of the incarnate Word, to say with Thomas, "My Lord and my God".

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## IV.—HIS MORAL PERFECTION.

No view of the Saviour's teachings respecting His own person could be regarded as at all complete which should leave out of account those bearing on His ethical perfection. The subject is a very large one. We content ourselves with calling attention to a few of the more important statements in the gospels relating to it.

1. Some of these statements present it in its negative aspect of sinlessness. It is not only that there is no indication of His ever having had the sense of sin, that no expression looking in this direction ever escapes His lips; something all the more to be noticed, that it is exactly as men advance in holiness, that the slightest stain is felt and mourned, if it exist at all. There is also positive evidence of spotless purity on Christ's part. He expressly asserts His innocence; the entire absence in His own case of all those departures from right feeling and right action which in one degree or another characterise all others. Speaking of Himself, He says, "no unrighteousness is in Him" (John vii. 18). The connection in which the statement is made has led some of the commentators to give the meaning of falsehood to the term employed here. For this there does not appear to be any valid ground. Whether in thus speaking the Saviour had in view the accusation with which He was charged, of breaking the Sabbath, and to which reference is made in the context, as Godet contends and Meyer disputes, there seems to be no reason for not taking the word "unrighteousness" in its proper sense of departure from what is just and right, and this for Himself the Saviour expressly and in the most absolute terms disclaims.

Again, addressing the Jews, He says, "Which of you convicteth Me of sin" (John viii. 46, R.V.). The evidence of the Saviour's sinlessness here does not lie so much in the silence with which this interrogation was met, as in the direct and unmistakable consciousness of the entire purity of His own life which it implied. "He knew no sin," and knew no sin because there was none to know. "He knew sorrow," to quote the words of Principal Fairbairn, "but it was the sorrow of the heart that weeps for sin, not of the conscience that reproves it." It should be added here, that the sinlessness of Jesus, the spotless purity of His life, was a purity developed and exhibited under the limitations of creaturely existence, one consistent with temptation and maintained notwithstanding it. The sinlessness of Christ loses much of its significance for us, if with Schleiermacher the reality of temptation in His case be denied. While it must be admitted on the other hand that it is possible to form such a conception of the nature of the temptation to which He was subjected as to involve the presence in Him of some incipient tendency to evil. The devout student of the Saviour's person will be on his guard against it. It is important also to note that the notion of sin, not as a lapse from integrity, but as a necessary transitional stage in human development so favourably entertained by some philosophic thinkers, would seem to be discredited by the sinlessness of Jesus Christ.

2. The ethical perfection of the Saviour, as represented in the gospels, did not consist merely or even mainly in the absence in His case of the defects and blemishes which appear in all others. It was overwhelmingly positive; the positive indeed in His case, as it is in the case of those who are less perfect, was the veritable root of the negative ex-



cellence. He Himself so represents it in a passage already referred to: "He that seeketh His glory that sent Him, the same is true and no unrighteousness is in Him" (John vii. 18). The first clause in this statement is not simply a characterisation of the speaker, it supplies at the same time the explanation, the ground of the last clause. That "there is no unrighteousness" in Christ is due to the fact that He "seeketh His glory that sent Him". The positive element in the Saviour's perfection consisted thus in His entire and uninterrupted devotion to the will of God, a devotion manifested under circumstances extremely trying, and so absorbing that no selfish and therefore no sinful thought or aim could assert itself in its presence. The passages here are too numerous for quotation. Let the following suffice: "I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me" (John v. 30); "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me" (John iv. 34); "I do always those things that please Him" (John viii. 29). This is much more than innocence. It is holiness, the supreme devotion of the life to another, to God the Father, and yet in such wise that man, so far from becoming less an object of interest, of loving service, is only more so. Accordingly the ethical perfection which the Saviour exhibits while absolutely unworldly is at the same time intensely human (comp. Matt. xv. 32; Luke iv. 18; John xiii. 14, 15).

The most striking feature, indeed, in the Saviour's personality, ethically regarded, is the degree in which it was pervaded, penetrated by the consciousness of God; a consciousness intensified by whole nights spent in prayer, and one which apparently was never lost, not even amid the darkness of the cross and the agony of expiring nature (Matt. xxvii. 46; Luke xxiii. 46). On the human side it is

this which constitutes the great distinction, the originality of the life of our Lord. Other men, it has been said, have had a genius for discovery, for art, or for government ; He had a genius for holiness. This alone, even though no claim to pre-existence, or to the possession of Divine perfections had been raised, must have made His life one of pre-eminent religious significance. Indeed, this immanence of God in Christ, and of Christ in God, in the purely moral sense, is so full of significance, and for all higher natures so attractive, that it is not difficult to understand how some devout spirits have become intolerant of any other, have refused, without proper ground it is true, any community of essence, any mere metaphysical union of the Father and the Son, as fitted, in their opinion, to mar the simple and majestic beauty of the human and natural life filled and glorified with God.

To conclude, in Jesus Christ, the personal, historical Christ, we behold, as instructed by Himself, One truly human, a sharer of our human nature and human lot ; One who stands at the head of the human race, embodies the Divine idea respecting it, but One who, true and perfect man, had an existence which antedated His human birth, antedated the world itself ; One, moreover, who possesses the nature, exercises the prerogatives and accepts the honours of Godhead ; One, in fine, who exhibits a type of human excellence which has never been equalled, and in the presence of which even forms of excellence which owe all that is best and highest in them to its inspiration show dim and imperfect ; " His glory as that of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth ".

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE MISSION OF CHRIST.

WE have asked and endeavoured to answer the question, Who is Jesus Christ? What account does He give of Himself? In the answer to this question, we have seen Him to be the possessor, according to His own declarations, of an altogether unique and wonderful personality, one combining strangely opposing characters; the child of Mary, the Son of God, the servant and yet the judge of mankind. We are now to inquire, What did He come to do? On what errand did He leave the glory which He had with the Father before the world was? The character of the errand should correspond to some extent with the unique qualities of Him who was sent to fulfil it. Such correspondence at least is expected by us, and a brief consideration of the Saviour's statements on the subject will show that we are not to be disappointed.

These statements as recorded in the gospels present Christ's mission under several aspects, all of them, no doubt, closely connected, and separable in thought rather than in fact. It is presented:—

#### I.—IN RELATION TO THE LAW.

The Saviour came into the earthly life among a people and at an age when there had been given unto them a great revelation of law, both moral and ceremonial. They had been taught to regard this as their special heritage, marking

them off from all other nations. In addition, a large body of prophetic teaching had gathered round the law, explaining and enforcing it, and especially holding out the hope of a great deliverance to be wrought for the nation and the world. Accordingly, appearing as a teacher sent from God, it was necessary for the Saviour to define at a very early period His relation to the law and to the prophets. This He did; one of His earliest statements would appear to have had this for its object: "Think not that I am come to destroy (*καταλυσαι*) the law or the prophets, I am not come to destroy but to fulfil (*πληρουν*)" (Matt. v. 17).

The statement is not free from difficulty, specially in respect of the twofold contents of the Jewish law, its moral and its ritual requirements, and of the undeniable results of the Saviour's ministry in the case of the latter. Take, for example, the rite of circumcision, the enactments in regard to sacrifices, the appointed feasts, the various washings, the distinctions in food; one cannot but admit that the effect of Christ's mission has been to bring them into desuetude, virtually to abrogate them for His followers. Nay, this seems to be the direct purport of His words in Mark vii. 15-23, and all the more obviously so, if we follow the reading of the Revised Version: "This He said, making all meats clean". The difficulty of bringing this into agreement with the declaration contained in the Sermon on the Mount is very obvious; by Baur it was thought to be so great that he came to the conclusion that the Evangelist in reporting the sermon must at this point have mistaken Christ's meaning. This is a very violent and to us inadmissible solution of the difficulty which, indeed, is not so insuperable as this view would make it. Dr. Bruce seeks to obviate it, and in doing so, at the same

time, to define the exact relationship of the Saviour to the Old Testament law as laid down in the statement, by emphasising the distinction between intention and result, making the purport of the declaration to be really this, that Jesus did not come on purpose to pull down the old, did not come in the spirit of a destroyer, however that might be the result of His ministry in so far as many ritualistic requirements were concerned. He will not even call that change, that falling into desuetude, a destroying but rather fulfilling which corresponds to the replacement of the blossom by the fruit, and which was one of the undeniable effects of His ministry. It must be admitted, that the view here presented is well entitled to consideration, and, whether supplying an adequate explanation of the difficulty or not, that it contains elements of truth not to be overlooked. Much of the ceremonial or ritualistic portion of the Mosaic law, if superseded by Christ as that relating to sacrificial offerings was, was superseded only in the sense of these offerings attaining to their full significance in His own blessed sacrifice.

The explanation, however, seems to lie rather in the sense in which the Saviour is here contemplating the Jewish law. If we may judge of the meaning of the words from the statements which immediately follow, their main, if not their sole, reference must have been to the law on its moral side ; for it is with this exclusively that He deals in the Sermon on the Mount, and in the way not certainly of lessening its obligatory character, but rather of pointing its comprehensive and spiritual nature, and of setting its requirements in a new and deeper light. Having the law as thus viewed before Him, He might well say, He came not to subvert or annul it, not to destroy or even to lessen



its binding force, but to fulfil or perfect it. The reference, therefore, is not so much to the obedience which He was to render to its requirements in His own person, for, in the connection in which it stands, the term "fulfil" cannot have that force here, as to the indication of its true scope and purport, if not to the establishment of its authority on a new basis, that of love to Himself.

It is thus the Saviour presents a part and a not unimportant part of the purport of His Divine mission. That mission was not indifferent, still less hostile, to the existing Mosaic law. It neither left it to the side, nor antagonised it; on the contrary, it brought to light its underlying spirit, enlarged its scope, and reinforced its obligation by the weight of His own authoritative proclamation. There is no mistaking the force of the recurring expression, "Verily, verily, I say unto you," when placed before this and the other precept by which the law was deepened and developed. And not by His teaching only, but by His example He asserted its inviolable claims, Himself submitting even to its ritual requirements (Matt. iii. 15), and honouring those which were moral in every detail of His life. As a result, the law is not less but if possible more binding on the consciences of mankind, while its compass is enlarged to embrace every part of the life, that even which is most inward and spiritual being brought within its scope. This was to fulfil, that is, perfect, the law which God had given by Moses to the Jewish people, and through them to the world.

## II.—IN RELATION TO GOD.

In this connection the purport of the Saviour's mission is presented in a threefold point of view.

1. As designed to reveal the character and perfections of

God. "Neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him" (Matt. xi. 27). This is not, indeed, a statement in a direct form of the aim of the Saviour's mission; but as a declaration of what He did in fulfilling that mission, it bears indirect and unmistakable testimony to what that aim was, or what at least entered into it. No statement of it would be regarded as even approaching completeness which did not embrace this, the disclosure by His word and in His own person of God and of God in His fatherly character. In substantial agreement with the passage quoted are the words, "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John i. 18), words not, indeed, spoken directly by Christ, but by the Evangelist respecting Him, and exhibiting with unquestionable truth one important phase of His work. It is true, as has been already remarked, Christ teaches no absolutely new doctrine of God. The statement bearing on this point is in many respects a very striking one, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee, but I have known Thee . . . and I have declared unto them Thy name and will declare it" (John xvii. 25, 26). It has this in common with the passages already referred to and with others that might be quoted, that it contains a claim on the Saviour's part to an exclusive knowledge of the Father and to His communication of that knowledge to hearts fitted to receive it, but it asserts this claim with a pathos that is all its own. The undertone that makes itself heard throughout it is the Saviour's lament over the world's ignorance and misconception of the Father, whose perfections He discerned and revered, such lament as a person will sometimes make over the

world's misconception of the friend whose genuine goodness he has often proved. But the sorrow which the passage reveals is not without its solace. The divine perfections undiscerned by the world are fully known to and as fully appreciated within one heart, "I have known Thee," and yet more, others have been made to share in part at least in that knowledge and should still more largely share in it. "I have declared unto them (the disciples) Thy name and will declare it." By the "name" of God we are to understand the character of God as revealed, with perhaps special reference to the name of "Father," in the present case "righteous Father," as in an important respect summing up the Saviour's revelation regarding Him. In the light of these statements we need not hesitate to place the disclosure of the Divine character in the front of the aim contemplated in the Saviour's mission, in so far as it was related to God.

2. As designed to accomplish the will of God. The testimony here is of the most direct kind. "For I came down (am come down, R.V.) from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (John vi. 38). The statement is to the effect that He has come down from heaven, that He has accepted the limitations of creature-being in order to exhibit in human form perfect obedience to the will of God; to that will, however, not so much as inculcating the great principles of morality, love, truth, righteousness, but rather as purposing the salvation of sinners of the human race. That this is the force of the declaration is made evident both by the preceding and the succeeding context. It will be observed that it is made in confirmation of the assertion, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come unto Me" (v. 37); and still more decisive, the

will of God which He is come to do is expressly defined in verses 39 and 40, as contemplating the ultimate salvation and glory of all believers. The statement under consideration is motived in part at least by the question addressed to the Saviour by the Jews in verse 30, "What dost Thou work?" And its purport is substantially this, He has no separate course of action to pursue, no personal ambitions to gratify, no plan of His own to follow, distinct from that of God. He is here simply to carry into execution the grace-will of the Father that sent Him, implying, as He sees it to imply, submission to suffering and death. It is surely instructive also to notice that precisely this is the ground of His confidence, that His work cannot fail of success, His endurance of suffering be resultless. It is not that He is possessed of a power supreme in the world of nature and of human life, but that He has no ends of His own to seek, that to carry out the will of God is His supreme, His sole purpose. "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me, shall reach Me (*ἔξει*), for I am come not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." What a lesson for us, for all Christian workers!

This aim of the Saviour's mission would seem to have been already present to His mind when He was still little more than a child. "Wist ye not," were His words to His parents who had sought Him sorrowingly, "that I must be about My Father's business?" The Revised Version, it is true, gives a somewhat different turn to the interrogation, substituting "in My Father's house" for "about My Father's business".

Here belong also the words of the Saviour to the disciples at the well of Samaria, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work" (John iv. 34). Is the

meaning of the statement, that the doing of the will of God, with which unknown to the disciples He had been engaged in their absence, took for the present in His life the place of eating? In that case the use of the term "meat," or food, would be explained simply by the connection in which the statement was made, and would really be equivalent to, My work or My task. But may its force not be, that the doing of the will of God, in opening the kingdom of heaven to this Samaritan woman, had been a positive refreshment to His exhausted person? It is certain that not a little of the exhaustion which is experienced as the result of so-called Christian work is closely connected with the selfish element that in our case so often enters into it. To lose sight of all other ends, except the giving effect to the Divine grace-will, to exercise an activity of which this is the inspiring motive, must, from its very nature, be largely a refreshment and a joy; the former because the latter.

### III.—IN RELATION TO MEN.

Here the Saviour's teachings are naturally much more numerous and full. It is therefore not easy to group them in such a way as to avoid leaving important declarations out of view. The following statement of the purport of His mission in this relation can only be regarded as approximately adequate. It is presented to us in two distinct aspects, though, as might have been expected, with unequifness :—

#### A. In its aspect of grace.

1. Its gracious character is stated in general terms in more than one passage, thus: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor, He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering

of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord " (Luke iv. 18, 19). The words are taken from Isaiah lxi. 1, 2, and are applied by the Saviour to Himself in opening His ministry at Nazareth, though according to Dr. Bruce they were spoken at a much later period, and are only found towards the beginning of the record through their being so placed by Luke; whether the terms employed are regarded as descriptive of physical ailments or of those spiritual ills of which the physical are the outcome in the sensuous sphere, or, as the terms seem to suggest, of both, Christ announces that the object of His mission is to their relief, and that to this end the Spirit of the Lord has been given to Him in pre-eminent measure. In the last clause there is an obvious allusion to the year of Jubilee, as one of release for both person and property among the Jewish people. In a much higher sense and in a far wider compass, His ministry thus then inaugurated was to be just such a time.

The statement, taken as a whole, has the same typical significance for Luke's Gospel which the Sermon on the Mount has for that of Matthew. The stamp which it puts on the Saviour's ministry, when regarded, as it very naturally is, as supplying the keynote of that ministry, is in the first place one of grace, of multiform beneficence; all the more strikingly so that the quotation from Isaiah is dropped just where in the original a feature of a different character—"the day of vengeance of our God"—comes into view, and in the next place, it is one of universality. There is nothing in the terms employed to indicate the restriction of His beneficent action to those of one race or of one locality. It stands all the more fittingly in the forefront of Luke's Gospel, which has preserved for us beyond any of

the other gospels those aspects of the Saviour's teaching that are most catholic, most broadly human.

To the same class belongs the statement in Matt. xviii. 11, but of doubtful genuineness in that place, and in Luke xix. 10 (R.V.), "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which is lost" (*τὸ ἀπολωλός*), that is, lost sinners viewed in the mass or aggregate. Zaccheus was one such, and in saving him, Jesus will say, He was not going out of His way, He was simply doing His proper work. There is some difficulty as to the exact force of the words immediately preceding, "for as much as he also is a son of Abraham". Alford, with Meyer, regards the reference to be simply to his Abrahamic descent. "He has his rights as a Jew, and has availed himself of them by receiving his Lord in faith and humility." Godet on the other hand, following the view of Cyprian, Tertullian and Chrysostom, understands the term "Son of Abraham" in a figurative or ethical sense. The force of the statement will then be, publican though the man was, and an object of contempt to those about him, he had or he has in him the believing and receptive disposition of the father of the faithful. Which-ever of these views is adopted, there is no mistaking the gracious character in which the Saviour is presented in the main statement. He seeks and saves the lost. The word "lost" has a strong ethical meaning. The tense even is instructive; not those who are in danger of being lost, or who are in the process of becoming so, but those who have become, who are, actually lost. To save such, and to seek them with a view to save them, is the very end for which He came. The truth is as precious as it is familiar. How necessary, in passing it before our minds, to be on our guard against that contempt which familiarity breeds.

Similar statements from the Saviour's lips might be readily multiplied, such as, "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world" (John xii. 47); "The Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives but to save them" (Luke ix. 56), omitted, however, as a gloss in the Revised Version; "Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 28; Mark x. 45); and "I am among you as He that serveth" (Luke xxii. 27). In each of these, it will be noticed, antithesis is made use of to convey a still more impressive sense of the entirely gracious character of the Saviour's mission. The advent to our earth of the Son of God, His presence among sinning as well as suffering men, might have been for the purpose of vindicating the Divine Authority by the infliction of punishment, or at least of claiming and exacting service at men's hands, in reality it was for the purpose of healing human sorrow, of ministering to human need, of saving and of serving men. What painful but at the same time effective forms this service was to assume will be afterwards seen. It is sufficient for the present to notice its general character as in the highest degree gracious.

2. Its special functions are stated in the Saviour's teachings. It is difficult to present an enumeration of these that shall be at once distinct and exhaustive; for on the one hand they are in one respect as manifold as man's needs, and on the other they are more or less implicated the one in the other, and they are all bound up in the most intimate way with His wondrous personality. In the case of others one can always distinguish the worker and his work. Here it is not possible to do so. He is at once the Revealer and the Revelation, the Priest and Offering. Himself "is made



unto us wisdom, and righteousness and satisfaction and redemption". Attention, however, may be called to the following as among the main functions which enter into His mission, as that is exhibited in His own words.

(a) That of communicating divine truth to mankind. "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness" (John xii. 46 ; comp. John viii. 12 ; ix. 5). To dissipate the world's darkness, not simply its ignorance of God, but of the whole realm of truth and duty of which God is the centre, was one aim of His manifestation in the flesh. The very name disciples implies that He whom they followed was pre-eminently a teacher, indeed He calls Himself, at least by implication (Matt. xiii. 57 ; Luke iv. 24), a prophet, that is, one empowered to reveal the will of God, to speak truth authoritatively in His name. This was the first function which in His Messianic character He had to discharge. It would appear that it was in this aspect that His work was in the first place regarded by those who gathered around Him, and with most of them it probably remained to the end its most conspicuous feature, nor can it ever lose its significance, while the unaided reason proves so inadequate to solve the many questions urgently soliciting answer. The inquirer after truth must ever turn to Him who is "the faithful and true witness," "who has come a light into the world" and "the light of the world," that whosoever believeth on Him should not abide in darkness. Two points seem deserving of notice in this statement ; first, Christ claims to be the light not of one nation only, but of all nations, of mankind at large. The inference would not appear to be a strained one, that He would have us regard the scattered rays of truth which are found outside

of Christendom, as emanating from Him. Second, He gives this light to the world by which its darkness is dissipated, not only by what He says but very specially by what He is. His pure and rich personality it is which constitutes Him "the light of the world," clearing up, as it does, many of the darker and more oppressive mysteries of life. And, what is to be particularly noticed, He is the light in virtue of being the life. "The life" is "the light of men" (John i. 4), and not, as we may have been disposed more frequently to put it, the light is the life of men; though this also contains doubtless an element of truth.

Under this function, and forming an important part of it, was the Saviour's announcement of "the kingdom of God," with the attendant call to repentance. This announcement He made at the very commencement of His ministry: "After that John was put into prison, Jesus came unto Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye and believe the Gospel" (Mark i. 14, 15). What this Kingdom exactly is, must be the subject of inquiry in a subsequent chapter. It is only necessary at this point to notice that it lay near to the very heart of His mission to announce its establishment, the introduction (for some such meaning the terms must have) of a veritable reign of God among men and over men. And not only did He make this announcement; He declared that this was the very end or at least one of the ends for which He came: "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, for therefore came I forth" (Mark i. 38). And, as if impelled in the matter by an irresistible constraint, we find Him saying: "I *must* preach the Kingdom of God to other cities also" (Luke iv. 43). Thus He came into the

world to preach, to preach a definite message, "the Gospel of the Kingdom of God," to announce its establishment, really in His own person as its head, and, as was to appear at a later period, with the sacrifice of His own life as its abiding foundation.

Testimony is borne to the same Messianic function in the Saviour's reply to the question of Pilate, "Art Thou a King then? Jesus answered, thou sayest that I am a King; to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth" (John xviii. 37). The element of authority, as characterising Christ's proclamation of the truth, is the distinctive feature in this statement. Truth, absolute reality, is His realm in which He is completely at home. Accordingly His disclosure of it is of the nature of testimony, carrying all the weight and authority of testimony. As He elsewhere expressly says, "We speak that we do know and testify that we have seen" (John iii. 11). The statement is still further important as establishing a connection between the prophetic and the kingly office of Christ. If He speaks on human duty and human destiny, it is with an authority quite regal. The emphatic "I say unto you" is perpetually recurring. And if He rules in the realm of human thought and human action it is in virtue of what He says and how He says it. Truth, not the sword, is the sceptre which He wields.

Thus the mission or ministry of Christ testifies, in opposition to one of the errors of the day, to the importance of speech, of definite, articulate utterance of truths, both of fact and of doctrine. His prophetic work is a part and a necessary part of the agency by means of which He founds His Kingdom, and by means of which He blesses and saves individual men. Jesus, no less than John, came preaching.

(b) The surrender of His life on the Cross. Jesus Christ came not simply to reveal the Father, to interpret and enforce God's law, to exemplify obedience to it in His own person, but also and very specially to lay down His life. If it may be said of other men, that they are born to live, of Christ it may be said with much truth, that He was born to die. This we know is the teaching of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (ii. 14), but it is not less the express teaching of Jesus Christ Himself. It is not only taught by implication in His words, "I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep" (John x. 11); it is expressly asserted (John xii. 27) when having the Cross in His view and with its dark shadow disturbing His ordinarily serene heart, the Saviour says, "But for this cause came I unto this hour". The whole passage is one deserving of close attention. It runs, "Now is My soul" (*ψυχή*, the seat of the natural emotions as distinguished from *πνεῦμα*, the spirit or rational nature) "troubled, and what shall I say?" The conflict as at the temptation is a real one. The thought of a possible deliverance is present, but arises only to be rejected: "Father, save Me from (*ἐκ* not *ἀπο*) this hour". There are two ways of regarding these words, either as an actual prayer, or as a continuation of the interrogation of the previous clause. Both views have been taken. It is difficult, however, to understand how the Saviour knowing all that was before Him could have offered this as a real prayer, unless indeed it is rendered, as some propose to render it, Bring Me safely out of (*ἐκ*) the conflict, and in that case, the farther difficulty arises of seeing how the strong adversative "but" can come to its true force. We prefer, therefore, the second view, which is that adopted by Godet, according to whom the words are "the

cry of nature, if Jesus had suffered nature to speak". But this cry He cannot allow to rise from His anguished heart. Accordingly He corrects it by adding, "but for this purpose (*διὰ τοῦτο*) came I unto this hour". The "*τοῦτο*," says Godet, "may be regarded as a slightly mysterious expression of the something which had just plunged His soul into so much trouble, the gloomy and unspeakable events of the hour which was drawing near and which He felt tempted to remove by prayer," and the meaning of the whole clause to be, "It is because of this death which I am to undergo, that I have held on to this hour".

Nor is this the only passage by any means in which the Saviour lifts into view His submission to a violent death as a part, and a necessary part, of His mission into our world. At an early period in His ministry He said to Nicodemus: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up" (John iii. 14). Peter made his great confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples how that He must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised again the third day" (Matt. xvi. 21). Neither is it the only passage in which He contemplates, as He looks forward, with profound agitation of soul. We mark the same extreme tension, if not perturbation, of feeling in the words, "I have a baptism to be baptised with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke xii. 50).

It was thus a constituent part of the Saviour's mission as interpreted by Himself, to lay down His life. His office was not prophetic only, though this function was naturally the first to be exercised; it was priestly likewise. A violent

death was not an issue which overtook Him by surprise; still less was it, what some with shocking profanity have not hesitated to make it, an expedient deliberately planned by Christ to extricate Himself from a situation created by His imprudent zeal and extravagant claims, and which had ceased to be any longer tolerable. It was an experience embraced in His undertaking from the first, though it may have gained distinctness in His mind as He advanced towards its consummation.

But the preaching of the Kingdom of God and the endurance of death were both of them means to an end, or to ends which were contemplated in His mission, and which lend to it its high and distinctive character. These are specified by the Saviour in numerous passages. The following may be mentioned here:—

(c) The bestowal of life. "I am come" (or "I came," R.V.) "that they (the sheep) might have life and might have it more abundantly" (John x. 10); "As the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth (*ζωοποιεῖ*) whom He will" (John v. 21). And again, "I give unto them eternal life" (John x. 28). The bestowal of life, then, is not simply the prerogative of Christ, it is expressly said to be one of the ends, perhaps we ought to say "the supreme end," of His mission. Now how are we to conceive of this boon? Some in recent times have understood it to mean existence simply, existence perpetuated into eternity. According to the view entertained by this school, death, which is the result of man's sin, is identified with the total and permanent extinction of personal being, and Christ is regarded as coming to avert this doom, to restore to man, believing on Him, the forfeited boon, undying existence, otherwise designated "eternal life". But to read

this meaning into the term "life" in the passages quoted, and, by consequence, the antithesis of it into the term "death," where it is employed to designate the penalty of sin, is to alter very materially and to the same extent to degrade the significance of the gospel. It is not denied, indeed, that a degree of plausibility can be given to the view by concentrating attention on certain passages of Scripture, of Old Testament Scripture especially, and by carefully disregarding others, but a fair and impartial view of Scripture as a whole must lead, we think, to its unhesitating rejection. In the present case we have to consider the question simply in the light of the Saviour's teachings. That the "life" which He bestows is something more than perpetuated existence, and something qualitatively different therefrom, would seem to be evident from the following considerations drawn from these teachings ; first, men are said (John v. 24) in the act of believing to pass from death unto life, language not readily applicable to the terms when construed as proposed ; second, the boon is one which believers are said to possess and to possess here and now : " I give (I am giving) unto them eternal life " (John x. 28) ; third, it is a bestowment which admits of degrees ; " that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly " (John x. 10), a quality which is not readily applicable to existence as such ; and fourth, it is said by Christ to consist in the knowledge of God and of Himself. This at least is the force in which the words, " This is life eternal that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent " (John xvii. 3), are most naturally taken. We come to the conclusion, therefore, that while perpetuated existence is presupposed in the life which Christ came to bestow, that life is not constituted

thereby. "Life," "eternal life," is blessed existence, existence of which the animating principle is the knowledge, and therefore the love, of God in Christ. This knowledge, involving as it does love, for only he who loves God knows God, is not the gate into life eternal, it *is* life eternal; it is not the road by which it is reached, it is itself the goal.

To bestow life in this high and blessed sense, to replace death thereby, constitutes, according to the texts quoted, a principal aim, perhaps we should rather say *the* principal aim of the Saviour's mission, in so far as it related directly to men. This representation of the matter, indeed, is taken largely from the Gospel of St. John. The word life, it is true, is found again and again in the synoptical gospels, but it is rather as that into which the man enters (Matt. xviii. 8; xix. 17), than as that which enters the man, which he possesses. In the teachings of Christ recorded in these gospels His function is spoken of under the more general term of *saving* men (Matt. xviii. 11; Mark xvi. 16; Luke xix. 9); and where more specific terms are employed they are such as these, making whole (Matt. ix. 12), calling to repentance (Mark ii. 17), bestowing forgiveness (Luke vii. 47), giving rest (Matt. xi. 28, 29). In His sayings which John gives us, on the other hand, the bestowal of life takes the precedence of all else; is the constantly recurring thought. There can be no doubt that it supplies the deeper and more comprehensive view of His work.

(d) The maintenance of the life imparted. This element in the Saviour's mission is obviously very closely connected with the preceding, and may be said to grow out of it. It is presented, however, in distinct statements, for example, "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the



Father; so he that eateth Me, even He shall live by Me" (John vi. 57). The statement is one of remarkable depth and of profound significance. It presents God the Father as the supreme source, the original fountain of life. To this fountain the Son only has direct access, and men therefore can attain to it only in and through Him. "The life which He thence (from the supreme source) derives, elaborated and reproduced in human fashion in His person, becomes through Him accessible to men," and is to be sustained on our part by the continuous exercise of appropriating faith in Him, by a faith, that is, which appropriates and assimilates Him as the body does the food which nourishes it. This is also in substance the teaching of Christ in John xv. 1, 4, 5, 6, and x. 9.

The mission of Christ embraces also the bestowal of the Spirit, the exercise of a continuous judgment of men, the raising of them from the dead, and their final judgment at the last day, but as these are not directly specified as ends of that mission, and indeed are rather agencies employed in subservience to the proper ends, we omit any further reference to them at this stage. We pass now to the Saviour's teachings regarding His mission.

B. On its side of judgment.

The first statement which meets us here is, "For judgment came I into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind" (John ix. 39, R.V.). The meaning of this would seem to be that the mission of Christ, the manifestation of God in human form, takes effect as in a manner it could not but take effect, in two ways according to the different reception which it meets, and this again is dependent in a measure on the different character of those to whom it is addressed. In

the one case, "they which see not" (οἱ μὴ βλέποντες), that is, those who have, comparatively speaking, no intellectual attainments, the ignorant and uninstructed, termed "babes" (νηπίοι) in Matthew xi. 25, having no pride of knowledge to prevent their embracing the truth of Christ, come to "see" through its means; in the other, "they which see," those who had large knowledge of divine truth, both fact and doctrine, "the wise and prudent" of Matthew xi. 25, resting on their knowledge and puffed up by it, are made "blind". It will be noticed that the term designating the result is not μὴ βλέποντες, not seeing, but τυφλοὶ, "blind". The former would denote simply undeveloped or unexercised spiritual vision, the latter points to the actual destruction of the organ of sight. The main difficulty in connection with the statement, is not in the difference of the results said to be produced by the one manifestation of truth and goodness, is not in the mere fact that refusing to see what is presented to them in Christ, shutting their eyes to the light which God gives through Him, men lose the very power of seeing; it is in the connection of this fact with the design of the manifestation, in other words, in the declaration that it was a part of the design of the Saviour's mission, "that they which see might *be made* blind". This difficulty is relieved, if not removed, by the consideration that the result takes place under laws which God has instituted, which He maintains in operation, and the operation of which is, on the whole, gracious. Taking place thus, the result may be said to be divinely ordered, even designed, though it is really and properly the work of man. The truth in any case is a sufficiently awful one, that the great vision of love and righteousness in the person of Christ, disregarded or refused

to be entertained, the organ itself of spiritual apprehension, is impaired and in the end lost.

In Luke xii. 49-53 we have another aspect of the Saviour's mission on its side of judgment, one in which it is presented as rending very close earthly ties, arraying in mutual hostility members of the same household. "I am come to send" (in the Revised Version, "I came to cast") "fire on the earth," literally to throw a firebrand. Obviously the reference in these words is not to the fire of the Holy Ghost, but to the intense spiritual excitement taking effect in different directions, which was to be produced by His coming and which was to result in the entrance of division and estrangement into the most closely related circles. The Saviour adds, "What will I, if it is already kindled?" Some take the force of the words to be, What will I? would that it were already kindled! Others, What have I more to seek since it is already kindled? In the latter case, the Saviour "must be regarded as expressing a mournful satisfaction that the inevitable rending of humanity is already beginning," "the father divided against the son and the son against the father". To the same effect is the statement in Matthew x. 34, 35, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace but a sword; for I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law". It must be stated, however, that this rending of the ties of nature, this introduction of discord and alienation into the bosom of the family even, is rather the inevitable, though no doubt the foreseen, result of the Saviour's mission than its direct aim. It is certainly not the *primary* aim, which is rather to unite men than to separate them, to introduce love rather than discord; but

as necessarily bound up in man's fallen state with the attainment of this aim, even the rending of natural ties can be spoken of as in a manner designed. In some instances, happily not in all, the bond of nature must be broken, in order that the brotherhood of grace may be formed. It will not be forgotten, however, that if the name of Christ has been sometimes a sword to cut close and even sacred relationships in twain, it has been a gentle force to knit others holier still and more lasting.

#### IV.—ITS TEMPORARY AND ITS SEEMING LIMITATIONS.

1. In respect of race. "I am not sent" (was not sent, R.V.) "but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. xv. 24). And similarly in sending forth His disciples He said, "Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. x. 5, 6, R.V.). It seems to have been appointed that the *personal* ministry of the Saviour should be confined within the limits named, though it occasionally, as in the case given in the record from which the first quotation is made, overstepped them. This is not inconsistent with the character of universality, which is stamped upon the Gospel by the general tenor of the Saviour's teachings. The Fatherhood of God which He discloses is assuredly not one applying to the Jewish race only. The forgiveness of sins which He proclaims is not for any single nationality. The last command which He enjoined on His disciples is, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark xvi. 15). It was accordingly only His personal ministry which was thus limited, possibly because even in the interest of the universal kingdom which He desired to found, it was the wisest course to begin "by

securing a footing within the boundaries of the elect people. The limitation, so far as it involved race, was obviously temporary and founded on some sufficient reason of expediency, with perhaps the additional ground, that God's covenant people had the first claim on the service of their promised Messiah—of Him who was of the seed of David according to the flesh."

2. In respect of character. The text already quoted (Matt. xv. 24) may carry an additional limitation of this sort. The words are not "to the house of Israel," but "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel". It is true "the lost sheep" in the present case might grammatically be regarded as the synonym of "the house of Israel," and thus as inclusive of the whole people, but it is at least equally consistent with the form of the expression, and even with the context, to regard it as specifying a class of them, those overlooked and neglected by the religious teachers, the shepherds so called of the nation. It is a fact that the classes too humble or too depraved and degraded to receive the attention of the scribes and Pharisees, were precisely those towards whom the compassion of the Saviour was most strongly drawn forth. Not to rest the distinction, however, on this at best doubtful interpretation, there are statements of Christ, which seem to imply it that are quite explicit, for example, "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick" (Luke v. 3), and "I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" (Matt. ix. 13; Mark ii. 17; Luke v. 32). The words "to repentance" are found in Luke, but are wanting in the best versions, both in Matthew and Mark; the "call" in these being rather regarded as a "call into His kingdom". In any case the words were spoken, not as a formal and independent statement of the scope of

His mission, but as a justification of His conduct in eating with publicans and sinners. They ought probably to be regarded as spoken from the point of view of the Pharisees, taking them according to their own estimate, and, if so, they must be regarded as partly ironical. Assuredly the Pharisees would have been among the last whom the Saviour would have admitted to be "whole" and "righteous" in the sense of not needing His healing power, or of not needing repentance.

We must not regard the words therefore as meaning that in the Saviour's estimate there are in our fallen world classes or even individuals who are absolutely righteous (*δίκαιοι*) and as such not requiring salvation at His hands, but rather this, that it is in their capacity as "sick," as "sinners," that He has to deal with men, and that His mission can only be expected to take saving effect where the sickness is recognised and the sin confessed. The limitation here, therefore, is rather seeming than real; it is more in the form of the statement than in its actual content and meaning. Besides, it is never to be forgotten, as throwing light on the force of the statement, that very many, probably the majority of those whom Christ called to discipleship, were in the better sense of the term righteous, not self-righteous, yet neither openly wicked, but sincere and upright as Nathanael, pure minded and truth loving as the Mary who "sat at His feet".

To sum up what has been brought out on this subject, the mission of Jesus Christ as unfolded by Himself has for its primary object the glory of God in the salvation of men. In accomplishing this great object He becomes the source and bestower of life in the high and blessed sense of that word, He sustains the life imparted, He illumines the soul

with truth, He assures the believer of the divine forgiveness, He bestows on him the Holy Spirit, and finally He crowns the gift of life with the resurrection of the body. In coming to accomplish salvation, He came also, as among the means for its accomplishment, to fulfil the law, that is, to make full, to perfect the conception of it and to establish it on a new basis, and at the same time and very specially to reveal the Father, and to carry out in His own person the Father's will. It is not the direct and primary aim of His mission, but it is its unavoidable result, where it encounters aversion or persistent indifference, to ripen the former into actual hostility, the latter into spiritual blindness and apathy. If not resorted to and trusted as the sure foundation, He becomes a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. It is thus that the last judgment is already foreshadowed in the different attitudes into which His mere presence throws men, revealing, as it had been said of Him by the aged Simeon in His childhood, "the thoughts of many hearts".

## CHAPTER V.

### MIRACLES.

THE question which this subject raises is one at once of great importance and of present day interest. It belongs, indeed, rather to the department of Apologetics than to that of Theology proper; it is not therefore of subordinate moment. On the contrary, it stands, as is seen in the resurrection of Christ, in close and indissoluble connection with the truth of the Christian faith, including its highest and most sacred verities. Therefore to have the place and value of the miracles which He wrought defined by the Saviour Himself must have been important under any circumstances. It has become especially important in our day in view of the very diverse opinions which have come to be entertained regarding their significance as evidences of Christianity, even in the ranks of those who claim to stand on Christian ground.

It is impossible not to recognise a wide change of view on the subject to which they relate. Not very long ago they were very generally regarded as the great bulwark of the Christian faith, as indeed they still are by some apologists. By a large and steadily increasing number they are now regarded as occupying only a subordinate place in Christian evidence; while by some they are felt to be rather a burden than a support in relation to the maintenance of the truth as it is in Jesus. The miracle which was the great defence of Christianity, it is said, has now to be itself defended.



The acts of superhuman power ascribed to Jesus Christ in the gospels are felt by some to be a stumbling-block to faith in Him, rather than an aid. That at least is their avowal, and there is no reason to call in question its sincerity, however little sympathy we may have with the mode of thought from which it springs. In these circumstances the attitude of Christ Himself to miracle becomes invested with great interest. It becomes highly important to ascertain what light His own teachings throw on the debated problem, and to what extent, if any, the change of view on the subject, which all must recognise, has been rendered necessary by at least a partial disregard of their teachings. Perhaps it may be found that the advance of thought on the question has simply brought it back to the ground taken in the beginning by the Master Himself.

It is not our design in this discussion to attempt to exhibit the whole place of Christ's miracles in His redemptive work, or, otherwise expressed, their place in all respects. For example, they were of value as ministering relief to human suffering and as consoling human sorrow. It was, indeed, only an inconsiderable portion of the one and the other, existing even in Galilee and Judea at that time, on which they operated, but the relief imparted was all-important to those, whether few or many, who shared it. It is in this light, indeed, as relieving human misery and as wrought in the exercise of compassion that the miracles of Christ are most frequently presented by the Evangelists. "Jesus," it is said, "went forth and saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion towards them and He healed their sick" (Matt. xiv. 14; similarly Mark i. 41; viii. 2; Luke vii. 13, and many other places). Again, the miracles of Christ have a distinct value, as illustrating in at least some

of its aspects both the nature and the conditions of His gracious working in the realm of spiritual life and throughout all time. They may be regarded in this respect as parables in action, and as such serving at once to guide the thought and to impress the imagination.

Now the words of Christ which we are to consider have no very direct bearing on either of these aspects of His miraculous works. It can scarcely be said, indeed, that by any of His own words are His miracles presented either as instances of compassion or as illustrations of spiritual truth. It is the sacred historian who sets them before us in the former light. Christ Himself rather evinces His compassion for suffering men by acts, than expresses it in words; though, as we shall see, the character of tender human sympathy which is stamped on most of His miracles is an important factor in such evidential value as attaches to them. And as to the latter—their instructiveness in relation to the character and conditions of His present and permanent working—the Church has been led to recognise it, more as the result of its own reflective thought, than of any direct statement in the gospels.

The Saviour, however, while almost silent on these aspects of His miracles, speaks quite frequently of what may be termed their evidential value, and from so many distinct points of view as to render His statements on the subject both highly instructive and extremely important. We shall now endeavour to exhibit, to estimate and to relate these statements. In this connection, where the aim is simply to set forth Christ's teaching on the subject and to ascertain its significance, it is obviously unnecessary to formulate any exact definition of the miracle, and still more so to discuss on philosophical principles its possibility, or

rather it would be here quite out of place to do the latter. The reality of our Lord's miracles is assumed and so also the historical truth of His recorded sayings respecting them.

1. The need of miracles in order to faith in Himself is treated by the Saviour as a weakness and a fault. To the nobleman who besought Him to come and heal his son, He said: "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe" (John iv. 48). In the accumulation of terms—"signs," visible tokens of an invisible power, and "wonders," startling departures from the usual course of nature, thus signs which are at the same time wonders—there is already an indication of the Saviour's disappointment at and displeasure with the spirit which met Him. The very terms in which the indisposition to faith, if not the incapacity of its exercise, is expressed are peculiar: "Ye will in no wise believe" (R.V.), *οὐ μὴ πιστεύσητε*, rendered by Godet: "It is not to be feared that any one will believe," a rendering by which a touch of irony is given to the expression. As the nobleman's presence and request were themselves evidence of the possession by him of at least some faith in Christ, the exact meaning to be attached to the statement is not obvious. It may have regard to the fact that the man thought Christ's actual presence with his child necessary to the exercise of His healing power, and had therefore not attained to the faith of the centurion who said, "Speak the word and my servant shall be healed"; or, in view especially of the use of the plural "we" in the Saviour's reply, the words may be regarded as, while spoken *to* him, rather spoken of the general population in Galilee whom the man's presence brings into view. The first demand made on Him the moment He sets foot again on Israelitish soil is for the exercise of His miraculous power. He sees

in this the desire to make Him a mere Thaumaturge or worker of miracles, with the inevitable result of throwing into the background the far loftier spiritual aspects of His mission. He is the more pained by it that it contrasts so strongly with the spirit which He has met in Samaria where He had been welcomed as the Messiah, and where men had believed, and believed on Him with a faith that was carried up into knowledge because of His word simply (John iv. 41). Thus the need of miracles—"signs and wonders"—in order to awaken faith in Himself, or even, as in the case of the nobleman, to strengthen already existing but feeble faith, is regarded by the Saviour as a disappointing if not blamable weakness.

This view is only intelligible on the supposition that in Christ's mind there is something else than miracle, something more distinctly personal, which warrants faith in Himself and on the ground of which therefore He challenges that faith. When we inquire what this is, we are not left in doubt. It is not exactly His testimony respecting Himself, it is certainly not that in its naked unsupported form. It is rather the unique, because sinless and divine personality revealed at once in word and act, which underlay the testimony and by which it was sustained. It is not the mere verbal assertion of His divine prerogatives; it is the inward sense of oneness with God which constrained this assertion and the manifestation of this unique character in a life of transcendent grace and truth. He is so conscious of His Divine Sonship, and thus also of His Messianic vocation, that He must assert His high claims: "I am One that beareth witness of Myself" (John viii. 18); "We speak that we do know" (John iii. 11). On the other hand to those who have listened to His teaching, to those especially who

have followed in His company, there have been such manifestations of His unique perfections as to make the acceptance of these claims at once reasonable and dutiful. On their simple ground He challenges faith in Himself, "Believe Me," He said, "that I am in the Father and the Father in Me" (John xiv. 11). There is no mistaking the nature of the appeal here; it is to the Divine as dwelling in and shining forth from Him. His own unique personality is presented as the sufficient warrant for the faith which He demands. The words which follow, the alternative which they offer, render this still more clear and unmistakable, "Or else believe Me for the very works' sake". The alternative appeal is to the miracles performed by Him, for "the works" referred to must at least include these, even if not identical with them, as a legitimate ground and warrant for faith in His name, but a ground and warrant for faith with which a deeper insight into His character, a more courageous and venturesome spirit would have enabled them to dispense. This road to faith was not after all a necessary one for men to take. It was only the second best; if one which He allowed, it was not one which He commended. So much seems to be implied in the "or else" of the Saviour's statement. The miracle proper, or what at least is usually understood thereby, is relegated by this expression to a place of subordinate importance. The moral even as an evidence is made to take precedence of the miraculous to men inquiring the road to faith or seeking to be established in faith; He directs attention in the first place to what He is, and only afterwards, and if the former is ineffectual, to what He does. The statement made as it was at the close of His ministry and, as we may say, in the neighbourhood of the cross, thus confirms the view that the need of miraculous

attestations of His Messiahship was regarded by the Saviour as a weakness and a defect.

2. The demand for miracles is traced to a wrong moral state, and is refused with threatening of judgment. The first evidence which meets us in support of this position is the circumstance that this demand is again and again spoken of by Christ as a temptation (Matt. xvi. 1; Mark viii. 11, 12), and is answered in the first place with a sigh, as of bitter discouragement. "He sighed deeply in His Spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek a sign?" In such a demand there is that which makes itself felt as a discord within the Saviour's spirit. But He does not stop with this inarticulate expression of disappointment and dissatisfaction. He lifts into view the moral state out of which the demand arose and passes judgment on it: "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas" (Matt. xii. 39). The "sign" in this instance would appear to be not simply a miracle of healing, such as Christ had already wrought, but one of such an astounding character as, in the view of those addressed, would unmistakably attest His Messiahship, a sign *κατ' ἐξοχην*. This they demand (*ἐπιζητεῖ*) as indispensable, and the demand is by Him said to be due to their wrong moral state—to the fact that they belong to a generation or race which is "evil" (*πονηρα*), the very word which in the masculine gender and with the article is used to designate Satan, and "adulterous" (*μοιχαλὶς*) in the sense of having apostatised from God, proved unfaithful to that covenant in virtue of which Israel was regarded as espoused or married to God. Thus by these words the Saviour not only pronounces the demand for miracle on the part of those who had beheld His person,

and listened to His teaching as a condition of faith, unreasonable, a blamable weakness. He virtually affirms it to be the outcome and evidence of a depraved moral state, one in which the soul has become evil and apostate from God, and in which it has lost consequently the tender and sacred susceptibilities to the Divine, through which its presence is recognised directly and without any aid of miraculous attestations.

A similar and indeed still terser statement of the same truth is found in Matthew xvi. 4 and Luke xi. 29: "This is an evil generation, they seek a sign," as if this alone were enough in the circumstances of His presence and teaching to stamp it as evil. The demand is flatly denied and with threatening: "There shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall the Son of Man be to this generation." The reference would seem to be, as in the one case, not only to the miraculous deliverance of Jonah but to his proclamation of impending judgment over Nineveh, so in the other, not only to the resurrection of Jesus but in and with that to His judgment of the persistently impenitent among the Jewish people. This was to be the sign, confounding all their calculations, and carrying presages of coming judgment to the unbelieving, His resurrection from the dead by the mighty power of God.

Now, it is true we must be careful how we place on a level with this demand for a sign of His Messiahship, so impatiently received by Christ and so severely rebuked, the desire in our day, however strongly entertained, for intellectual satisfaction regarding His Divine claims, the desire such as many cherish for more powerful, more con-

vincing evidence of their validity. If men are justified in seeking certainty on any matter, it would seem to be on the character and prerogatives of Him who asserts claims so transcendent and proffers blessings so limitless. But in yielding to this feeling, in demanding a kind and degree of evidence which should leave no room for doubt, should as it were constrain faith—in demanding more and other evidence than what lies to hand, notwithstanding the manifestation of God in Christ with which we are favoured in the gospel, both in the original records which embody its contents and in the history of its operations—are we not coming dangerously near to those whom Christ styled an “evil and adulterous generation”. The words of the Saviour now considered seem to place it beyond doubt that there are depraved moral states which require, in order to faith in His name, stronger, more overpowering evidence than do other states in which the spiritual sensibilities have been preserved unimpaired, even as another word of Christ now to pass under review appears to point to the truth that there are states of still more advanced depravity on which all evidence falls powerless.

3. The inability of miracles to overcome settled unbelief is affirmed by Christ, or, keeping still more closely to the purport of His testimony, their incompetency to effect any inward moral change in those instances at least in which the evidence of Divine revelation has been resisted. We refer to the words: “They have Moses and the prophets, and if they hear not them, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead” (Luke xvi. 29, 31). The words, it is true, are those of Abraham, but they are put into his lips by Christ, and come, therefore, with all His authority. They are spoken in reply to the statement that



the return of one from the dead would be certain to result in the conversion of the still sinful and impenitent brothers. "If one went to them from the dead," it was said, "they will repent." Jesus pronounces this an illusion. He who clings to the sinful life in the face of the warnings of the law and the prophets will not be brought to conviction of sin and a change of life even by the sight of one raised from the dead. There will be at best a temporary outburst of astonishment and terror, after which the subject of these emotions will sink back into a state of security and indifference only the more profound and hopeless because of the passing and short-lived disturbance of feeling. It is not indeed said, Neither will they repent; the words are, "Neither will they be persuaded," something still deeper, implying, however, in common with repentance, not a mere intellectual belief, but a gracious movement of heart and will. This, we are permitted to affirm on the authority of Christ, miracle even of the astounding kind supposed cannot effect. It can astonish, terrify, perhaps even silence, though not this always; but it is powerless to throw the life into a new moral channel when—and this is all-important, for it is the exact case before us—it is a life which has experienced only to resist the influence of express Divine teaching. The affirmation is one corroborated both by the well-known laws of the human mind and the facts of experience..

It has to be added here that even when the witness of His miracles awakens a kind of faith in Christ, it is not a kind to win the Saviour's confidence, obviously because not such as to change the inward, the real character of the man. Hence we find it said, "Many believed on His name, when they saw the miracles which He did. But Jesus did not

commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men" (John ii. 23, 24). We are here brought face to face with a new and most instructive limitation of the power of miracles, or perhaps it is just the incapacity already referred to, only exhibiting itself in another form. In any case, it presents an aspect of the subject which the Christian Apologist cannot afford to disregard. It is in virtue of this characteristic, indeed, that the really moral nature of faith in Christ is preserved, that is, its intimate connection with the whole inward disposition and character of the person exercising it as at once expressing and summing up that disposition and character. This would be lost were it either, on the one hand, the effect of miracle simply, manifestations of supernatural power, or, on the other, the mere conclusion of a syllogism or a series of syllogisms. It is, in fact, intensely moral, and therefore the bare miracle, however stupendous, cannot produce it, is powerless to do so where the requisite and fitting moral conditions are wanting.

But nevertheless,

4. A certain influence, both gracious and the reverse, is conceded to miracles or claimed for them by the Saviour. Addressing the cities wherein His ministry had been exercised, He said: "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes" (Matt. xi. 21-24). At first view this statement seems inconsistent with the teaching which has previously passed under notice. In reality it is not, it is simply complementary to that teaching. In asserting that the repentance of Tyre, Sidon and Sodom would have been the result of their witness of such works of power as had been performed in these Galilean

villages, nothing more is implied than that such works carry with them some power for good. This is too obvious to admit of dispute. They can and do awaken observation. They call attention in a forceful way to the presence and working of supernatural power. They may thus be spoken of as protests against the blindness which allows the laws under which God usually works to hide Him, the worker. They are condescensions to human weakness. "In miracle God so works that man cannot but notice a presence which is not blind force but personal will" (Gore's *Incarnation of the Son of God*, p. 50). Consequently, in cases in which the nature is not hardened by resistance to revealed truth, or by neglect of known duty, repentance, a changed life, may result from witnessing it, would have resulted, Christ affirms, in the case of these heathen cities, wicked and immoral indeed, but not gospel hardened, not rendered callous by insincerities. On the other hand, and for the same reason, they render more aggravated the guilt of a sinful life, when that is persisted in notwithstanding their solemn and arresting testimony. Hence the "woe" pronounced on Chorazin, Bethsaida, and most of all on Capernaum, as the scene of probably more of the Saviour's mighty works than any other place, and possessing the distinction of being termed "His own city".

The power of miracles to aid and strengthen incipient faith is implied also in the Saviour's words to the disciples in John xi. 15, where, referring to His absence from Bethany during the sickness and death of Lazarus, He says, "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe". The allusion is evidently to the miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus, which He was about to perform. The disciples were already believers, but, as has been

remarked, each new advance in faith makes the previous stage look like unbelief. Such an advance in their case the Saviour anticipates as the result of their witness of His power in raising from the dead one who had been already four days in the grave.

Once more we have in John xv. 24, "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin, but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father," a strong attestation of the power of miracles such as Christ wrought to aggravate guilt and condemnation when their natural and proper force is resisted. To understand the statement, and many others indeed which are made regarding the Saviour's miracles, it is necessary to take into account the fact that they were not mere prodigies (*τερατα*), not mere works of supernatural power (*δυναμεις*). Regard must be had at the same time to their ethical character, to the consideration that they were also great manifestations of God in His goodness and condescension. That this characteristic of His miracles was really present to the mind of Christ when He made the declaration is evident from its closing terms: "but now they have . . . seen . . . both Me and My Father," obviously in the miracles He wrought. By this, by the moral elevation which belonged to them quite as much as by the attribute of power which they displayed, they were distinguished from the works which other men did. Accordingly the refusal to recognise their true character, the ascription of them to some complicity with Satan on His part, the rejection of Him who wrought them, could only proceed from blind hatred of that God whom they professed to worship, a hatred which they at the same time confirmed and deepened. Only by taking this element into account,

indeed, can we understand either the power of the Saviour's miracles to warrant and to strengthen faith in Him, or the added guilt which they attach to the rejection of His divine mission and claims. Different views have been taken of the words "they had not had sin". According to Meyer, they mean that if Christ had not come, the Jews would not have rejected Him, and in Him God, and thus they would not have by this rejection filled up the measure of their apostasy from God. Perhaps it is enough to regard the statement "they had not had sin" as equivalent to "they had had no such sin"; but "now," says Christ, "they have both seen and hated," that is, they have the sin of having "seen" (in My miracles), and in the rejection of Me, though thus attested, of having "hated both Me and My Father".

The influence which is ascribed to the witnessing of a miracle must belong in an even higher degree to the working of one. This fact finds recognition in another word of Christ, "There is no man which shall do a miracle in My name, that can speak lightly of Me" (Mark ix. 39). Alford remarks, "The very success of the miracle will awe him".

5. Christ Himself at times makes appeal to miracles as attesting His divine character and claims; His claim, that is, to be the Messiah and to stand in a unique relationship to God. We notice first here His words to those who on one occasion challenged His authority to forgive sin: "But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then saith He to the sick of the palsy), Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house" (Matt. ix. 6). It will be understood that the alternatives, as put by the Saviour in the preceding narrative, were not the forgiveness of sin on the one hand or the healing of disease on the other.

but the claim to exercise the one, or to effect the other. The point of the appeal is in *saying*, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," or *saying*, "Take up thy bed and walk". To the captious critics of the Saviour's conduct, it seemed an easy thing to *say* the former. There was no way of testing whether the utterance had any effect, whether it was not a mere idle as also and for that reason a blasphemous pretension. Christ will therefore vindicate His right to say it, will show that it is not on His lips an empty word, by adding the, in their eyes, harder one, by asserting a claim which was capable of direct verification, "Take up thy bed and walk"; we know with what triumphant result.

Even in this case, however, the force of the appeal must be regarded as dependent on some real connection between the man's release from sin and his restoration to health. It is not to be regarded as an example of one thing, a supernatural work of power being made the evidence of another thing, a spiritual prerogative, with which it had no natural connection. It seems safe to say that the Saviour never puts the attesting power of miracle in this light; a light in which the proof and the thing to be proved are not rationally related. It scarcely needs to be pointed out what an important bearing the principle, if true, has on the light in which the miracles of Christ are to be viewed.

The answer which Jesus gave to the messengers of John would also appear to be an instance in point here. When the question was asked Him: "Art Thou He that should come (ὁ ἐρχόμενος), or do we look for another?" the answer was: "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the poor have the Gospel preached unto

them" (Matt. xi. 4, 5; comp. Luke vii. 19-23). The Saviour thus appeals directly to the works He was performing as the attestation of His Messiahship. His words imply that the Baptist ought to be able to gather not uncertainty from them that He was the Christ, the coming One, notwithstanding circumstances attending His course which might be perplexing to faith. Now these works, to which He made His appeal, were obviously works of supernatural power; gracious, indeed, but not less markedly superhuman than unmistakably gracious. The view then (Wendt) which would find the whole force of the evidence which the Saviour adduced before the messengers of John in the graciousness of His works, the relief which they were ministering to human ills, without any regard at all to their miraculous character, is one which can with difficulty be maintained, must, indeed, be pronounced arbitrary and unnatural, even if we did not take into account the words contained in Luke vii. 21, 22, which Wendt, with surely very insufficient ground, wishes to drop.

On the other hand, from the character of the works adduced, and especially from the conjunction of the preaching of the Gospel to the poor with them in the enumeration, it must be maintained that their value as attesting His claims was not intended to be attached exclusively, if even mainly, to the element of supernatural power which pertained to them, but that it was meant to lie quite as much in their ethical character, their suitability to the course of One who appeared as the promised Redeemer of God's people. If the miraculous element may not be ignored in the evidence to which the Saviour points the messengers of John as little may the moral. Both together, or rather, those works of Christ in which both were inseparably united, should serve

to solve the doubts and restore the apparently waning faith of the Baptist.

Moreover in order to apprehend fully the light which this passage throws upon the evidential value of the Saviour's miracles, we must take into account the closing statement, "And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me". It is implied in this statement that there will not be wanting difficulties connected with the Gospel, possible grounds of offence in Him, even after the kind and degree of evidence adduced. It is very significant, that just in this connection the Saviour contemplates the possibility of doubt, nay of absolute refusal, in regard to His Divine claims, notwithstanding the testimony supplied by the works to which He had made appeal. Obviously the evidence of miracle, however important and valuable in its own place, is in Christ's eye not resistless. It warrants faith, it does not constrain it.

Thus far the passages in which Christ appeals to His miracles in attestation of His Divine prerogatives and Messianic dignity have been taken from the synoptical gospels. Declarations of the same purport are even more numerous in the fourth gospel; for example: "The works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me" (John v. 36); "The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me" (John x. 25), words spoken by Christ in answer to the appeal from the people, "If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly". To the same effect is the statement: "If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not. But if I do, though ye believe not Me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in Me and I in Him" (John x. 37, 38). Here, however, the term is not *δυναμεις*, acts of power, but *εργα*, works; a more general term, including those acts of



Christ, His talking to the people, for example, which one would term purely natural, as well as those others which were distinctly superhuman, and one which, as applied to His miracles, leads us to regard them as just as much the natural outcome of His Divine personality as our ordinary works are of our simply human powers.

It is not permitted us to doubt that to John as well as to the other three Evangelists the element of miracle was important as attesting the Divine claims of Jesus. "Many other signs truly," are his words, "did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book ; but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (John xx. 30, 31). But it must be admitted that if this element is present in the works to which Jesus appeals in the passages quoted above, it is not made prominent. It is not on it that the emphasis falls. It falls rather on the ethical perfection which characterises them than on the supernatural power which they evince. How are they designated ? As "the works of My Father," "the works that I do in My Father's name" ; thus, works worthy of God, impressive manifestations of the grace and the righteousness of God ; it is as such that they attest, not so much the Messiahship, but the fact that "He is in the Father and the Father in Him".

The same consideration, *vis.*, the importance which belongs to the ethical element in the miracles of Christ, is implied in another of His statements connected with this subject, "If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God is come unto you" (Matt. xii. 28). The cure of demoniacal possession, the deliverance of men from an alien power by which they were held in bondage, by the Spirit of God operative in and through Christ, is

here made more than a *sign* of the Kingdom of God, it is itself the coming of the Kingdom, but it can be this only in virtue of the ethical quality which belongs to it. The giving its proper place to this feature of the Saviour's miracles is vital to any right, not to say any worthy, conception of His teaching regarding their evidential value.

To sum up what has been found to be the teaching of Christ on this subject; the evidence of miracles is not indispensable to faith in Jesus Christ, the need of them to lead to faith betrays a weakness, a defect, and the demand for them, for "signs and wonders" is the outcome of a wrong moral condition. There is no power in the miracle as such, in a mere superhuman act, to change this condition, to throw the life into a new channel which has refused to yield to the influence of revealed truth. Nevertheless miracles have their place and value. They arrest attention, they arouse reflection. They make unmistakably plain the presence and direct action of God to the spectator. Under favouring conditions, meeting open and unprejudiced minds, they may lead to faith in Christ and to the new and better life which grows therefrom. They also and for the same reason aggravate the guilt of unbelief. But even while supplying a warrant for faith, they do not supply the highest warrant; that is rather what Christ is, His own unique and wondrous personality. To it therefore the first and highest appeal is ever made: "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me"; only when the hearer from defective appreciation of the spiritual and the Divine is incapable of responding to this appeal will He add, "Or else believe Me for the very works' sake"—take this other, but how clearly in the Saviour's opinion, lower ground.

It only remains to point out the bearing of this teaching as a whole on widely differing views which are held to-day on the subject to which it refers. It is obviously at variance with the view which is not content simply to give to the miracles of Christ a place of subordinate importance in relation to the vindication of His Divine mission or claims, but which so reduces their significance as almost, if not altogether, to efface it. Unhappily it is not only from the ranks of the sceptical, those who refuse to accept the testimony of the Evangelists to the reality of the Saviour's miracles, that the declaration comes that in any case miracles can be of no value as attestations of spiritual truth, that they can supply no rational warrant for the acceptance of any fact or doctrine, some who do not impugn the record—Christian apologists—have taken up ground not very different. Truth, they have said, must stand or fall by its own evidence. It cannot be sustained by anything external to itself. It must, if it is to be received at all, vindicate itself to the reason by its own intrinsic character. Now, without combating this position on other grounds, such as its inapplicability to such doctrines as that of the Trinity, the Incarnation even, it should be obvious that it is in conflict with the appeal which the Saviour from time to time made to His miracles. It is not only that His disciple writes: "These (signs) are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God," He Himself says, "The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me"; "Believe Me for the very works' sake"; and although, as has been seen, the supernatural power displayed in these works is not the only thing to be taken into account in estimating their apologetic value, it is just as little to be disregarded altogether. On

the whole, it would appear that the view which, in its desire to give due prominence to the ethical in Christ's working, refuses to attach any evidential value to the supernatural, or properly miraculous element therein, is as really at variance with His teaching, as that which, with perhaps more consistency, denies the reality of that element.

On the other hand, it seems to be almost, if not altogether, as difficult to reconcile with the Saviour's teaching the view which affirms the absolute necessity of miracles to a rational acceptance of His claims. This view, as is well known, has been very widely held. It was that of Butler and Paley. Mosley, in his Bampton Lecture on the subject, argues for it at length and with great confidence. "Certainly," he says, "if it was the will of God to give a revelation, there are plain and obvious reasons for asserting that miracles are necessary as the guarantee and voucher for that revelation." According to the view herein expressed, the miracle is not only confirmatory evidence of a Divine revelation, it is indispensable as a proof thereof. It does not simply supply a kind of evidence on which the mind can fall back if other evidence fails to produce conviction, it is the primary and necessary attestation of a message from God. All is made to turn, so far as the verification of a message from heaven is concerned, on the presence or the absence of miracle. Now, whatever may be said on philosophical grounds in support of this view, and however it may appear to fortify the Christian position, the claim cannot be made for it that it leans on Christ's teaching on the subject. Our consideration of this teaching has made it evident that in His view miracles, unless indeed in the sense in which His own person is regarded as the miracle, were not needed to warrant faith in Him; that

so far from these being an absolute necessity, they were necessary at all only where the soul's susceptibility to the spiritual and the Divine had been impaired, that the highest exercise of faith in Him was reached irrespective of them altogether.

In departing from this ground, in taking up a position on the subject in advance of that of Christ Himself, it is very far from clear or certain that anything has been gained. The facts would perhaps warrant the statement that there has been only weakness and danger as the result of claiming for the miracle more than the Saviour claimed. If difficulties have to some extent been created for the Church in our day by the claims advanced in past ages on behalf of the miracles of the gospels, have these not been due in part to forgetfulness of the Saviour's own teaching on the subject? It may never be forgotten that what Christ Himself is, His own wondrous and blessed personality, the unparalleled love which He displays, the singular elevation of the truth which He announces, the gracious transformation which He effects in the heart and life are still better and weightier reasons for believing in Him than the miracles which He wrought eighteen hundred years ago; nay, that even these owe much of their apologetic value to the relation in which they stand to His person and mission, to the extent in which they reflect His inner and essential qualities.

In conclusion, we may confidently affirm that the highest and most satisfying faith in Christ is not that which attaches itself either exclusively or mainly to the miracles which He wrought. The faith of a Nicodemus, such as finds expression in the words, "We know that Thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest except God be with him," may be reached in this way,

scarcely that of a Peter who could say, "We believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. Thou hast the words of eternal life." The Saviour's words recorded in John xx. 29 are full of instruction, even as they are decisive on this point. According to them the faith which is synonymous with blessedness is not that which is originated and sustained by sensible evidence. It is rather that which has learned to dispense with this in the embrace by the spirit of its own glorious object. The faith which He pronounced blessed on the occasion referred to was not theirs who were permitted to look on the Saviour's risen person, to behold on it the mysterious traces of a suffering itself mysterious, and to witness His ascension to the right hand of power, but ours which, if we do indeed believe, has no such outward impulse and support. Therefore, when disposed to attach primary importance to the miracles which He wrought, or when tempted to desire evidence of His Divine mission, distinct from that which is supplied in His own person, we may well regard Him as recalling us to a worthier and a safer position in the words which He spoke to Thomas: "Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed".

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE DEATH OF CHRIST.


WE enter at this point on a part of the Saviour's teaching that possesses pre-eminent importance and interest. The fact itself has from the beginning been regarded as central in the scheme of redemption. The Church has been led to attach the main significance in the redeeming activity of Christ, not to His incarnation, or His doctrine, or His life, but to His death. This circumstance alone invests with the greatest interest every utterance of the Saviour regarding it. But the interest which in any case must attach to the personal teachings of Christ on this presumed central fact is greatly enhanced by the consideration that a large and an apparently growing number claim that a significance has come to be assigned to His death which He Himself did not assign to it, and which His recorded words do not warrant ; and that, therefore, at this point especially, our systems of theology lean on Peter and John, and particularly on Paul, rather than on Christ, if they do not indeed positively contradict Him. Accordingly, it becomes in the highest degree important to determine with as much exactness as possible in what light or lights the Saviour presents this fact which His Apostles at least make central. With this end, we propose to pass in review all the more important statements which are made respecting it in the gospels, not excepting even those which, dealing with what is incidental and external, might appear to possess no great significance.

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I.—THE MANNER OF ITS INFLICTION AS DESCRIBED IN  
ADVANCE BY HIMSELF.

The fact that it was foreseen and predicted is one which lies on the face of all the narratives. How soon and in what way Jesus came to the consciousness of a violent death, as lying at the termination of the path by which obedience to the Father was to be consummated and the world redeemed, it is perhaps irreverent for us to inquire. There does not appear to be anything derogatory to His moral perfection in the idea that it dawned on Him by degrees, that it gained distinctness in His mind as His public ministry advanced and the hatred of the Pharisees and of the priestly order grew in intensity ; indeed, while not free from difficulties to our minds, this seems to be demanded by the natural mental development which was essential to the reality and perfection of His humanity and which the gospels expressly ascribe to Him (Luke ii. 52). Various circumstances connected with the manner of His death are made prominent by Jesus in His anticipatory statements respecting it.

1. To begin with the most general characteristic given regarding it ; it was to be *violent*. His removal from earth was not to be a translation like that of Enoch or Elijah, nor was it to be the result of disease or of natural decay. He was not to fall "as a shock of corn in its season". Life was to be wrenched from Him when He was yet in the full prime of manhood, and in the midst of His active labours. He was to be put to death. All His goodness should not be able to save Him ; that, indeed, accompanied as it was by the claim of a lofty and unique relationship to God, only made His death more certain, as it made His person more





obnoxious and His continuance in life more unwelcome. "From that time began Jesus to show unto His disciples how that He must go unto Jerusalem . . . and be killed" (Matt. xvi. 21 ; Mark viii. 31 ; Luke ix. 22). The note of time here is instructive and on no account to be overlooked. In all the three gospels this first plain and explicit intimation of His death is represented as made immediately subsequent to the recognition and confession of His Messiahship—His being "the Christ, the Son of the living God" by Peter, speaking doubtless first of all in his own name, but speaking also, we may believe, to some extent in the name of his fellow-disciples. Now, therefore, for the first time are they ripe for the reception of this startling truth ; now first can it be communicated to them without any danger of detaching them from their Lord. And not only so, now it was more than ever important to put them on their guard against those earthly and sensuous views of the kingdom which they were ever ready to entertain. Were they now assured that He was "the Christ, the Son of God," what might they not begin to expect for themselves? In order that their expectations might not be misdirected altogether, to prevent them forming and cherishing anticipations which they could never realise as His disciples, He began from that time to intimate frankly to them His approaching sufferings and death. To the same effect as the prophetic word we have been considering is the teaching of the parable of the husbandman, in which these words occur with reference to the son who was sent last of all, "they caught him and cast him out of the vineyard and slew him" (Matt. xxi. 39).

Jesus Himself ascribes this treatment of Him to the people's ignorance of the Father who sent Him, and therefore of Himself also (John viii. 55 ; xvi. 3), to their

insincere and heartless goodness, their misconception even as to what true goodness is, and to their consequent hatred of the light which came in His person (John iii. 20). His violent death was thus the natural, we may even say the necessary, result of the qualities which He displayed, and of the claims which He asserted, or of the hatred of His person which those evoked. Nothing could be less of the nature of an accident. Human nature being what it is, Incarnate Goodness, the Son of God, could not but suffer at its hands. In any account of the significance of the death of Christ this feature of it would need to find a place. It is, no doubt, a very grave error to resolve, as some have done, the death of Jesus simply into an instance of suffering for righteousness' sake, to see in it simply an exemplification of man's wicked hatred of the goodness by which he feels himself condemned, to find in this its whole significance, but it is an even more obvious, if perhaps less dangerous mistake, to overlook this element altogether, and to seek to formulate a theory of the atonement in which the intellect and the heart of the Church can be expected to rest without taking it into account. The most unquestionable truth, indeed, connected with the death of Jesus, as His own words regarding it, and the historical narratives present it, is, that it was *through* sin ; *through* sin if also *for* it. Through it, we cannot but see ; for it, we are permitted to believe. Must the "for it" not find its explanation in part at least in the "through it" ?

2. We have its form stated ; crucifixion. This also is embraced in the prophetic statement of the Saviour : "And shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to *crucify* Him" (Matt. xx. 19 ; xxvi. 2). It was a Roman not a Jewish mode of punishment, one

reserved for the worst criminals, and not inflicted on them even if Roman citizens. To be doomed to the cross was thus to be doomed to dishonour; to be crucified was to be in the eye of the law and of the people accursed. As the charge on which the Saviour was condemned was blasphemy, the mode of death would have been stoning had the power of life and death still remained in the hands of the Jewish people. The substitution of the Roman for the Jewish mode of punishment was attended by two results, neither of them, we may well believe, contemplated by those who inflicted it. First, just in proportion as the mode of death was ignominious, opportunity was given to show the power of Christ to transform ignominy into glory. The cross was shame, utter shame. Jesus suffered on it and at once it was transfigured, became the symbol of highest glory. Then, as compared with death by stoning, death by crucifixion has less the appearance of overwhelming its victim by rude brute force. It gives more room if not for the exercise yet for the exhibition of patience and resignation, while, in this instance, it furnished the opportunity for those last words spoken by the Saviour which have constituted so precious a heritage to the Church in all ages. In view of these results, it is not difficult to believe that the very mode of the Saviour's death was embraced in the plan of Him by whose "determinate counsel and foreknowledge" He was delivered into the hands of men.

3. We have the fact of *betrayal* again and again mentioned in the words of Jesus respecting His death, and in such a way as to show that it constituted a very appreciable element in His sufferings: "One of you shall betray Me" (Matt. xxvi. 21; John xiii. 21), or, still stronger,

"One of you which eateth with Me shall betray Me" (Mark xiv. 18). The word employed properly means simply to deliver up. It receives the additional idea of treachery from the connection in which it is used, and accordingly, where the connection is not such as to suggest this idea, it is translated in the Revised Version "delivered up" (Matt. xvii. 22). But in the great majority of instances in which the word is used in the gospels in connection with the death of Jesus, it is properly rendered betrayed. That is betrayal in the strictest sense of the word, when a person is handed over to his enemies by a disciple, by a friend. This too was a part, and, as has been said, an important part of the Saviour's trial as foreshadowed in His own words. The suffering of the cross was no doubt embittered to Him by the gate of betrayal through which it was reached. The word is employed in the same sense in "The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners" (Matt. xxvi. 45), as is put beyond question by the reference to the traitor in the subsequent verse. Under the term "sinners" here, some have understood the Romans, the instruments employed in accomplishing the death of Jesus, others, and with better ground, the members of the Jewish Sanhedrim, to whose active instigation it was due. Whatever view is taken on this point, the words used seem designed to express the truth, that the Saviour's suffering was intensified not alone by the act of betrayal, but also by the character of those—"sinners"—into whose hands He, the Son of Man, the Messiah, anointed with the Holy Ghost, was delivered up.

It is more difficult to determine the sense in which we are to understand the words "The Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of men" (Matt. xvii. 22). Here

there is nothing in the context, such as there was in the passage previously adduced, to suggest the idea of treacherous agency or, indeed, of human agency of any kind. The reading of the Revised Version is to be preferred: "The Son of Man shall be delivered up into the hands of men". When the question is asked, By whom delivered up? the most natural answer, and the answer which gives by far the deepest significance to the declaration, seems to be, by God the Father. Thus regarded there are few sayings of Christ which take us deeper into the mystery of His passion than this one. For a time His person is inviolable, almost unapproachable. The woman suffering from the issue of blood touches His garments only. The other woman, who was a sinner rather than a sufferer, stole stealthily behind Him and is content to shed her tears of penitence at His feet; but now, all is to be changed; not the Divine love indeed, but the Divine protection is to be withdrawn. He, the Son of Man, is to be given up into the hands of men; men not of this or of that class or race, but men generally. They are to be permitted without restraint to work their will on Him, to inflict on Him all of violence, and ignominy, and pain which it is in the heart of man to inflict on the goodness which condemns Him. Sin in man is to be suffered to do its worst, to exhaust itself, as it were, in putting to death—"they shall kill Him" (verse 23)—the Son of Man.

4. We have still further in the Saviour's predictions regarding His death a specification of the agents who were to take part in its accomplishment. (a) The elders and chief priests and scribes are mentioned in Matthew xvi. 21; the chief priests and scribes in Matthew xx. 18, as those at whose hands He was to "suffer many things," and by

whom He was to be put to death. The death of Jesus, regarded in one point of view, was the not unnatural result of a hostility to His person and claims on the part of the leaders of the Jewish people which began at an early period in His ministry and which grew in intensity as His ministry advanced, and especially as it was transferred from Galilee to Judea, where the priestly power was so much greater. In the earlier period it is mainly the Pharisees and the Scribes who are represented in the synoptical gospels as showing hostility to Jesus ; naturally so, for they were the religious teachers of the nation and their work as such was directly assailed and discredited by Him, as well as their character and lives impeached. It is only at a later period that the chief priests, men of another type, the representatives of ritual as the others were of doctrine, Sadducean in belief and governed in practice by no even mistaken ideal, but by sheer expediency, come into view in the record. And when they come into view, it is not to speak but to act ; not to argue with Jesus but to silence Him by death. But while it is almost first at the time of His passion that the chief priests appear in the historical narrative, they have their place from the beginning alongside of the elders and the scribes in His prophetic statements. Their deep-seated, even if at first silent, antagonism could not escape His observation ; and when the opportunity was given them, when His hour had come, they were ready to act as it had been foretold they would do. Thus, as had been predicted by Jesus, it was these, the religious teachers and the priestly rulers of the Jewish people, who were the primary agents in bringing about His death. Judas was simply their convenient tool, as was likewise the weak Pilate, yielding to their persistent demand. The fact is not to be overlooked,

it has its lesson for all time ; the most wicked and outrageous act which the world has witnessed was the work of priests and religious teachers so called ; furnishing a striking commentary on Christ's own words, " If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness ! "

(*b*) The " Gentiles " have a distinct place assigned to them in the prediction, " And shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify " (Matt. xx. 19). The reference in these words may well be to Pilate, the Roman Governor, without whose express assent Jesus could not have been put to death, and who did not shrink from inflicting a stain on Roman justice by first scourging One whom he had pronounced innocent and then giving a reluctant consent to His crucifixion, and along with him, perhaps, also to the Roman soldiers by whom the act of crucifixion was carried out. It must have been felt as an aggravation of the suffering and of the wrong, that He, the Head of the chosen people, the King of the Jews, was to be delivered over to heathen hands, to the pliant and unprincipled Pilate, and to the ignorant and brutal legionaries of Rome. But as the entire race was to share in the benefits of His death, it may have been fitting that both its two divisions should have a share in its accomplishment.

## II.—THE SUFFERINGS INVOLVED IN HIS DEATH, AS THESE WERE ANTICIPATED BY HIM, AND AS AT LAST ACTUALLY ENDURED.

The words of our Lord on this subject, hitherto passed under review, have been of a somewhat external character in relation to His death. We enter into another region altogether when we take account of those sayings which have reference to what He had to bear therein.

1. The Saviour testifies directly to the fact of this suffering and to its severity. The words spoken in Gethsemane will occur to every one here: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death" (Matt. xxvi. 38). Only extreme suffering, suffering of soul of an intense kind, could have brought this exclamation from His lips, uniformly so reserved in the expression of His personal feelings, whether of sorrow or of joy, and always so incapable of exaggeration. It will be noticed that it is the soul, the seat of the human affections, and not the spirit, the seat of the religious emotions, which is seized with this sudden and mysterious sorrow, and it is sorrowful even to the point of His dying from grief, "sorrowful even unto death". We have a similar and still earlier testimony to the suffering which the prospect of His death occasioned: "Now is My soul troubled" (John xii. 27), disturbed as by the presence of conflicting emotions of a powerful kind. The intensity of the trouble is disclosed by the momentary hesitation, almost doubt, when He is about to give expression to His desires to God: "And what shall I say?" Thus even in the distance the cross which rose before Him, and which the visit of these representatives of the Gentile world seems to have possessed the power of lifting into distincter view, broke for the moment the calm of His usually serene soul, stirring in it even perturbing emotions. The severity of the strain under which Jesus was put by the apprehension of the death He was to die comes still more forcibly before us in the words "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished" (Luke xii. 50). The baptism is that of blood, or, as the context might rather lead us to conceive it, of flame, through which He Himself was to pass, that He might become a torch to set the world



on fire. The prospect even of this baptism awakens an agony of conflicting feeling within His breast, "How am I straitened," closely pressed, until it be accomplished. We have here a prelude of Gethsemane, a *passio inchoata* of our Lord, as it has been termed, the first utterance of that deep anguish which afterwards broke forth so plentifully, but coupled at the same time with holy zeal for the great work to be accomplished.

These expressions, these outpourings of soul as we may call them, so similar in their character and all of them so intense, are the Saviour's own testimony to the severity of the anguish which the prospect of His death awakened. It will not be overlooked that they are all antecedent to the time of its endurance. None of them come from the cross; one only of them from its neighbourhood. But for the bitter cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" we might have concluded that the conflict was over, the bitterness of death past, before He reached the hour to die. In a measure no doubt this was the case. Gethsemane was the scene of the agony. On the cross there is nothing to indicate conflict, the struggle of contending emotions, though the deepest and darkest depth of suffering may well have been reached in that mysterious sense of forsakenness with which a communion hitherto unbroken was interrupted for a moment.

2. The nature of these sufferings, so far as the circumstances recorded in the gospels, or the Saviour's own words, enable us to apprehend it. Obviously the inquiry at this point is one which would need to be pursued with great reverence, in view of the sacredness which must ever attach to sufferings at once so overwhelmingly deep and so absolutely pure and unselfish and to which so peculiar an

efficacy is ascribed. There is unmistakable truth and propriety in the words used on this subject by one (Dr. Crawford) who has discussed the whole question of the atonement with singular fairness and sobriety of statement : "Nor can we speak of it (the suffering of our Lord) without feeling that we speak inadequately and fearing that we speak amiss". At the same time it is not permitted to us to avoid the inquiry altogether. The devout Christian desires, cannot but desire, some insight into the nature of those sufferings by which he has been redeemed. It is beyond doubt that such insight, if accorded, must be in a high degree sanctifying.

It is admitted on all hands that, even in view of the fact that the sufferings of Jesus included the pain of dying the lingering death of the cross, preceded in His case by the wholly wanton infliction of the scourge and the crown of thorns, and of this other fact, that His rare physical organism may well have rendered Him more sensitive to bodily pain than others are, these sufferings were not mainly physical ; that, on the contrary, they were mainly spiritual. The expressions made use of by Him point to agony of soul rather than to pain of body, to a torn heart rather than to a rent frame. Not to repeat here those declarations of His which have just passed under review, all of them partaking of this character, we find it said of Him, in the near prospect of death, He "began to be sorrowful and very heavy" (Matt. xxvi. 37). And when we read in the narrative of "His sweat, as it were great drops of blood, falling down to the ground," and listen to the agonising prayer, thrice repeated, the words of the Evangelist seem all too feeble to express the intensity of the agony. How are we to account for it? More than one of His followers have met death, in even still more pain-

ful and terrifying forms, with undaunted spirit. We are forced to believe that there was some peculiarity in this death which gave it such dismaying power over One so strong and holy.

Attention has been called to the element of shame, more intolerable than physical pain to a sensitive mind, as going so far to explain the horror with which Jesus shrank from the death which awaited Him. This He was called to bear in dying in its most trying forms. The cross itself, the form of death to which He was doomed, was shame. And He had to submit to it in the companionship of thieves, as if He were the most worthless of men. Then there was the scorn of Herod and his soldiers, the scarlet robe, the crown of thorns, and the mocking salutation, "Hail, King of the Jews," the blindfolding, the buffeting, and the spitting on His face, the derision even of the passers-by; what pangs may not all this wanton and heartless scorn have caused Him who was as sensitive as He was holy, and who just because He could feel so keenly for the sufferings of others must have been peculiarly susceptible to the feeling of suffering in His own person!

And yet this consideration goes a very little way towards explaining the agony in the garden and the bitter cry on the cross. We must bring other considerations, and considerations of a different order into view before we can even begin to understand the nature and the severity of the last sufferings of Jesus. We must have present to our mind the relation He sustained to those who inflicted them, and the disclosure made to Him through them of the awful nature of sin, the stamp of ingratitude, of hatred of God and of goodness which in their light it was seen to bear, and this hideous sin, the sin of the race whose nature He had

assumed, at the head of which He had placed Himself, whose representative before God He had become. We know what blacker hues falsehood, seduction, murder assume in a parent's eye when any one of them is committed by his own child, how there is not only a keen sense of shame, but a feeling scarcely distinguishable from that of personal guilt, as if himself sharing in some way in the sin. But Christ was nearer to the race of man, in some respects more closely linked to it, than even parent to child. How could its sin, culminating in the rejection and the crucifixion of Him, the Son of God, fail to pierce His heart with anguish! Even apart indeed from the peculiar character in which He appeared, and the unique relation in which He stood to the race, we can see how the course of action of the chosen people must have weighed down His soul with a load of grief. To love with a deep yearning passion such as we perceive in the plaint, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not" (Matt. xxiii. 37), and to have to accept death, with every accompaniment of pain and mockery, at the hands of those thus passionately loved and yearned over, that were to us even a sorrow inexpressibly bitter, how much more so to Him whose love was so much more intense and unselfish than any which our hearts can cherish! These considerations are not presented as offering a full and adequate explanation of the sufferings of Jesus in view of the cross and on it, but it seems impossible to doubt that they seem to point to what must have been a large element in them, and, what is all-important, it is an element which we can understand, one in the light of which, without losing either their sacredness or their

mystery, they become more intelligible to our human apprehension, and in the same degree more helpful and sanctifying. However possible it may be to doubt whether in dying Christ bore the punishment of our sins, it is beyond question, in the light of the considerations adduced, that He bore the sins themselves.

But while a real and an intelligible element in the Saviour's sufferings is thus supplied and one on the face of it intensely moral, we are very far from claiming that there were not other deeper and to us less intelligible elements therein. We cannot suppose that either the suffering caused by the disclosure of the hideous character of sin in the race with which He had become one, or the answer of Jerusalem to His deep, yearning love by the cross, was that contemplated in the prayer, "O My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from Me" (Matt. xxvi. 39), for in that case we would be shut up to the untenable conclusion that what He desired was either the dulling of His moral appreciations or the blunting of His human affections. Then it furnishes no explanation of that sense of desertion by God which makes itself known in the unspeakably mournful cry, the strangest as coming from His lips, which the earth has ever heard, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me" (Matt. xxvii. 46). And in addition, it may be said, that this purely ethical view of the sufferings of Jesus, when it is made the exclusive one, does not account for the whole efficacy ascribed to them, does not explain the direct relation in which, as we shall soon see, He Himself sets them to the forgiveness of sins and to the deliverance of men from condemnation and wrath.

We are forced to the conclusion, then, that there is no adequate explanation of the Saviour's sufferings, as these

are disclosed to us in His own words and in the statements of the gospels regarding them, which does not take account of the unique relation to man and to sin in man which He sustains, and of the penal character which His sufferings in consequence assume. He comes into the world not simply as a man, or even as a sinless man, but as the Son of Man ; He identifies Himself with man before God. As a result He comes not simply into a sympathetic but into a real relation with the sin, the guilt of man. He does not simply feel it as if it were His own. In a very real sense, though of course not in that of personal blameworthiness, it is His own, being the sin, the guilt of those with whom He has in the incarnation made Himself one. He feels its heinousness as only an absolutely pure nature can do. He acknowledges the justice of its condemnation in suffering not only through it but for it ; He bears its penalty in dying. If it is said that in thus representing the death of Christ we are going quite beyond His own words regarding it, it may be replied that the overwhelming sorrow, if not positive horror, which its prospect awakened within His breast, the sense of being forsaken of God, which was experienced amid its endurance, and the results ascribed to it in His own words, all find their most natural, if not, indeed, their only, explanation in some such view.

### III.—THE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS DEATH.

Before the statements of the Saviour bearing on this, by far the most important aspect of the question, attention should be called first to that through which any gracious significance attaching to it is conditioned, its *voluntary* character. There is no countenance given in the gospel narratives to the wicked if not indeed quite blasphemous

view that Jesus, by the pretensions which He had advanced and by the passions which He consequently awakened, had simply created a situation out of which there was no escape with honour but in death, and that therefore there was nothing left for Him but to endure it. On the contrary, His death by violence seems to have been distinctly foreseen from an early period, and when it came He submitted to it with entire freedom. It is not the whole truth on the matter, it is not even the most important part of it, that He was a victim to the world's hatred of such goodness as He displayed. He was a voluntary, a self-devoted sacrifice. He did not simply die when the time came, He came to die. "The Son of Man came . . . to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 28; comp. John xii. 27). This feature, the absolute voluntariness of His death, is one of which He makes repeated and emphatic declaration: "I lay down My life. . . . No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself" (John x. 17, 18). Thus the fact of the absolutely free self-devotion of the Saviour in dying is stated three times in this one passage. In a sense, indeed, every one who submits to death rather than turn his back on truth or duty may be said to die freely and of his own accord. But there is evidently something more than this in Christ's case, and something which is characteristic of His case only. "I have power," He said, or rather right (*ἐξουσία*), that is, not ability but just authority, "to lay it down and I have power to take it again." In view of the immediately following words, "This commandment have I received of My Father," the right to lay down His life of which He speaks, is by some regarded as growing out of the commission which He received from God and in virtue of which He appeared as the Redeemer of mankind. The

Saviour's meaning would then simply be, that He had a Divine warrant for the surrender of His life, as for its resumption after death. But while this is no doubt true, it may be questioned whether the power or right which the Saviour claims comes to its proper force under such a rendering. It seems preferable to regard it as the right to dispose freely of His own person, the right to retain or to lay down life at His will. Will He not say by the words He employs here that He possessed a control of His destiny which belongs to no creature? We know this to have been the case. Death with Him was not necessitated either by the plots of His enemies or by the fact of His being human. He may be said to have died with the same absolute freedom with which He laid aside His glory, or with which He entered on His ministry at the first. He died because He willed to die. No one could dismiss Him from life till He Himself had consented, had freely willed to be so dismissed. His words can hardly mean less than this. The statement of Godet on this point is worthy of attention: "Though there is devotion, there is also impotence in the death of a shepherd who lets himself be torn to pieces by the wolf to give his flock time to escape". But the death of Jesus was not the result of impotence. In His case there was none.

There is no mistaking the importance which the Saviour attaches to this feature in His death. The explanation is not far to seek. Its absolute voluntariness, the free and full surrender of will to God the Father, on His part, in dying at the hands of men, is not only a condition of its efficacy as the instrument of man's salvation, it must be regarded as contributing a positive and essential element thereto. In concentrating attention on His death as an



act of obedience to the Father (John x. 18; xiv. 31), He may well be regarded as teaching that it saves us, not simply as suffering, not even as the suffering of a Divine person, but also and very specially as obedience in suffering. "It was not His death," says St. Bernard, "that was well pleasing, but the will by which He chose to die." Accordingly, this ethical element while failing, when taken by itself, to account for the direct relation in which the death of Christ is set to the forgiveness of sins (Matt. xxvi. 28), cannot either be overlooked or treated as unimportant in the light of His own words.

Having considered the Saviour's testimony to the absolute voluntariness of His death, and endeavoured to estimate the significance of this characteristic of it, we are now in a position to consider the light in which His words set it to the work of man's salvation which He came to accomplish. We learn from these:—

1. It was of the nature of a deliverance: "I lay down My life for the sheep" (John x. 15). This is, perhaps, the most general statement made regarding it, and in this connection, therefore, may properly receive our first attention. In the earliest intimations of his death nothing is said regarding its purpose. It is presented simply as that which must be the result of the gathering hate of the leaders of the Jewish people, and to which He would offer no resistance (Matt. xvi. 21; xx. 18, 19; Mark viii. 31; ix. 31; x. 33; Luke ix. 22), but in these words supplied by John it is presented in a new character, as an event not only made necessary by the enmity of the scribes and Pharisees, but one graciously designed as well as freely endured. The preposition employed (*ὑπὲρ*) does not by itself carry the idea of substitution, but simply that of advantage—and on the behalf of—

though there are instances of its use in the New Testament and in connection, too, with the death of Christ (2 Cor. v. 15) where the idea of substitution is undeniably involved. What the statement before us, therefore, warrants us to affirm is, that while in appearance simply the triumph of hatred and violence over unresisting weakness, the death of Christ was in reality the sacrifice of love, a sacrifice voluntarily rendered, and rendered in the interests of His people, here termed in accordance with the allegory, "the sheep," and who are spoken of just in this connection as knowing and known of Him as the Father knows and is known of Him. It may be remarked by the way, that the Authorised Version is greatly at fault here, breaking up into three disconnected statements what is when properly rendered one simple and beautiful whole. The Revised Version gives the correct rendering: "I am the good Shepherd; and I know Mine own and Mine own know Me, even as the Father knoweth Me, and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep" (thus known and knowing). What the interest of the sheep is that is to be served by His death is rather implied than expressly stated. The words suggest their preservation from destruction, their safety amid danger of some kind or another. In order to define it more closely, we must have recourse to other words of Christ. In John iii. 14, 15 the end sought is spoken of as the obtainment for believers of "everlasting life". "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," in verses 17, 18 and 36 of the same chapter the end is viewed in its more negative aspect as their deliverance from condemnation, or, to use the Saviour's own words in the last verse, from "the wrath of

God". Just in what way His death was fitted to secure these ends, how His laying down of His life for the sheep was to contribute to their safety, is not stated in the passage under review. A not inconsiderable school of theologians explain it either mainly or wholly by the moral influence which such an example of devotion naturally exerts. Beyschlag, one of the latest of this school to express his views on the subject, speaks of Christ's death as simply continuing in another form the work of His teaching. The Cross of Christ cleanses, saves just as His word does, and in no other way except indeed as it was the pathway to His resurrection and glorification. His words are: "His death, therefore, is not the first thing that purifies and sanctifies His own, for that is already done by the word of His teaching. His death is only to complete the work of cleansing which His whole intercourse with them as a teacher had begun, and it really has the power of completing it; for the highest act of divine love is to lay down life itself in obedience to God (John x. 17, 18; xv. 13); how could such an act fail to cleanse from all remains of sinful self-seeking those who lay it to heart" (Beyschlag, vol. i., p. 275). It is fair to add, that he admits that another view, that of propitiation (cancelling of guilt) through the death of Jesus is not unknown to the Evangelist (1 John ii. 2). Other statements of the Saviour, one at least, to be subsequently considered, will be seen to be inconsistent with the position taken above.

2. It partook of the character of a ransom. The saying of Jesus which presents it in this light is, "Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 28). The exact meaning of this saying has been the subject of much discussion and, as was to be expected, very

diverse views have been taken of it. On the face of it, it is a statement of great moment, and one which largely entered into and moulded the thought of the Apostles on the important subject to which it relates (1 Cor. vi. 20 ; vii. 23 ; Titus ii. 14 ; 1 Peter i. 18 ; Rev. i. 5 ; v. 9). It may be admitted that the word "ransom" found here comes in somewhat abruptly, especially in view of the fact that the Saviour is in the passage drawing an analogy between His own life of service and that which He would have His disciples lead, and that it has little to keep it company in His teachings as a whole. But on that account only the more importance is to be attached to it. Taken broadly the purport of the statement is, that Jesus came into the midst of sinful and suffering men, not to exact service from them, but to render service to them, and to carry the service thus rendered to the point even of yielding up life itself for them ; that this surrender of life or the life thus surrendered for them, was to be the price of their deliverance, and that thus (for, looking to the context, this also is implied) He was to vindicate for Himself the first place in the Kingdom of God. The words seem to carry with them the presupposition that the soul of Jesus as guiltless was not forfeited to death, that His surrender of life therefore had a character which it did not and could not possess in the case of ordinary men. They positively teach, in the first place, that a pre-eminent importance is to be attached to the death of Christ ; they teach that it was not service in the form of instructive teaching, nor in that of holy example, but service carried to the point, and in the form, of surrendering life, that was to be the instrument—the words here and the general scope of the Saviour's teaching do not warrant us in saying the *exclusive* instrument—yet the pre-eminent

instrument of the deliverance of many. In the next place, they attach a distinct character to this surrender of life, in virtue of which it becomes the instrument of this deliverance. It is a ransom, a price which Jesus Christ pays to this end. Unless good cause can be shown to the contrary, the term "ransom" must be kept to its proper meaning ; that is, the death of Jesus Christ must in the light of this statement be regarded as serving the same end in relation to man's redemption from some evil in the grasp of which he is held, that the price paid to free a slave from bondage serves in relation to his emancipation. To make it purely metaphorical is really to empty the statement of all that is most distinctive in it. At the same time, it is not necessary to extend the analogy between the redemption of the sinner and that of the slave to all the particulars of the case, indeed we are not justified in so doing. The Saviour's statement, as we have seen, warrants us in saying that "the many" are set free from the evil condition in which they are found by His death, and by His death in the character of a ransom paid for their deliverance. Any further determinations on the subject, so far as this particular saying presents it, may be admitted to be more or less uncertain. With regard to the form which these will take, much will depend on the view which is adopted as to the nature of the hostile power from which men are here regarded as being set free by the ransom paid for them in the Saviour's death. Leaving the view out of account, that it is death (Wendt), as having little to support it, we have to make our choice between these two, the bondage to sin and the state of guilt and condemnation which sin entails, and in which apart from Christ and faith in Him men are regarded in the gospels as

being placed (John iii. 18, 36). We are inclined to adopt the latter, on this ground especially, that this is the side or aspect of redemption with which the fact of a ransom paid to accomplish it most naturally accords, and in connection with which the term "ransom" comes most readily and fully to its proper significance. The preposition employed (*ἀντί*), with the idea of exchange or substitution as its original and proper force—"instead of"—points in the same direction. Moreover, it is not to be forgotten that the term translated ransom (*λύτρον*) is applied in classic Greek to expiatory sacrifices, as the derivative word (*ἐλυτρώθη*) "redeemed" is in the New Testament; and although we are not warranted in making the positive assertion that it was in this sense that the Saviour used the term in this instance, it is the sense in which a commentator so free from doctrinal prepossessions as Meyer takes it to have been made. The force of the statement, as a whole, then is, that Christ's death is a vicarious sacrifice, on the ground of which the many who believe on Him are delivered from guilt and condemnation. The statement is then in line with numerous others found in the writings of the Apostles, and may well have been the source from which, under the guidance of the Spirit, these were drawn (Eph. i. 7; v. 2; Rom. iii. 25; v. 21). In any case it cannot be taken as meaning less than this, that it is to Christ's surrender of life, and surrender of it in the character of a ransom, that man's redemption, whether conceived as in a state of servitude to evil, or subjection to condemnation, is especially due. To treat the language as purely metaphorical, and thus make it express the general idea of deliverance, anyhow wrought, is to make the term "ransom" really meaningless, and to

evacuate the statement, as a whole, of what would appear to be most distinctive of it.

3. It is expressly or all but expressly said to constitute an expiation for sin. This significance so closely connected with the best hopes of the Church is claimed for the death of Christ, as we have seen, on the basis of the statement in the synoptical gospels just considered. It is claimed, however, with much greater confidence on the basis of the words employed by Christ at the institution of the Supper. They are given with some variation in each of the three synoptical gospels. They run in Matthew, "This is My blood of the New Testament (the covenant, R.V.) which is shed for many for (or unto) the remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi. 28); in Mark, "This is My blood of the New Testament (the covenant, R.V.) which is shed for many" (Mark xiv. 24); in Luke, "This cup is the New Testament (the new covenant, R.V.) in My blood, which is shed for you" (Luke xxii. 20). There is an obvious allusion in the statement under all its, in reality, not very different forms, to the inauguration and ratification by sacrifice of the Sinaitic covenant (Exod. xxiv.). Those who would minimise the significance and deny to the blood of which it speaks any expiatory character (*e.g.*, Beyschlag), call attention to the fact that the "blood of sacrifice with which Moses sprinkled the people" came in "at the solemn close of the act of institution," and argue that it was therefore not the foundation, but the ratification simply of the covenant into which God entered with the chosen people at Sinai. The claim is then made, that keeping by the analogy, the blood of Christ shed for many must be regarded, not as introducing or establishing the new covenant, but as simply ratifying it, giving men the solemn assurance

that on complying with its terms, its blessings, including the forgiveness of sin, would be bestowed.

In reply to this view of the Saviour's statement, it may be said first, that it is open to doubt whether the blood of the burnt-offerings and peace-offerings sprinkled, half of it on the altar and half of it on the people, had no further significance than that of ratifying the covenant then instituted. Even Beyschlag admits that it "signified a purifying of the people as they entered into communion with God". But passing from this, it may well be claimed, that while there is no doubt an allusion in the Saviour's words to the inauguration of the Sinaitic covenant, and while a certain degree of correspondence between its inauguration by the sprinkling of the altar and of the people with the blood of the victims slain in sacrifice, and the inauguration of the new covenant by the shedding of the Saviour's blood is implied, it by no means follows that the correspondence holds good in every respect, and, in particular, it does not follow that the Saviour's blood is contemplated by Him in the words before us, as serving no other purpose, in relation to the new covenant, than that served by the blood of the burnt-offerings and peace-offerings in relation to the old one—especially when this purpose is viewed as contemplating nothing more than the solemn ratification of that earlier covenant. This indeed is a view of the subject so utterly unsatisfactory, so disproportionate to the weighty terms employed, that it is impossible for the mind to rest in it. Accordingly it is no sooner made, than another consideration, one, moreover, which is wholly foreign to the idea of covenant-ratification, is introduced to help it out, that, namely, of the subjective influence of the sufferings of Christ. Beyschlag, for



example, in his endeavour to explain the statement, calls attention to the power which belongs to these sufferings to change the minds of men, to produce penitence and faith and thus to bring about the subjective conditions of forgiveness. In this way it is sought to account for the connection between the blood of Christ shed for many and the remission of sins, to which the statement as given in Matthew's gospel testifies, without ascribing any properly atoning, any expiatory character to it. It is not necessary to deny that an influence of this kind belongs to the Saviour's death, as it belonged, though in a less degree, to His teaching and His example, every one admits it; but it is difficult to believe that it was that which was present to His mind when He said, "This is My blood of the New Testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins". Indeed this view of the Saviour's meaning is ruled out decisively by the relation in which the remission of sins is set to the shedding of the blood. For, in the first place, this relation is a unique one. The forgiveness of sins is set in this passage in a relation to the Saviour's death in which it is not set in any passage to any other fact in His life. It is nowhere said that He taught to the remission of sins, or that He wrought miracles to the remission of sins, as it is here said and elsewhere implied that His blood was shed for many to the remission of sins. We are not only warranted, therefore, we are forced to recognise a significance as attaching to His death, differing not only in degree but in kind from that which attaches to any other fact or experience in His life. It is saving in a sense all its own. In the second place, the connection between the sacrifice of the cross and the forgiveness of sins is not only unique, it is, as here presented, *direct*. For-

givenness is not made, as the view combated would demand, an indirect result of His sufferings, one mediated by the penitence and the faith which they are supposed to work. It is presented as their direct object. Any other view of the Saviour's words, any such rendering of them as would make "blood shed . . . for or unto the remission of sins," mean blood shed to ratify a covenant of which remission of sins is one of the promised blessings, or blood shed to produce penitence, one of the conditions of remission of sins, must be pronounced unnatural and forced.

Nor is the expiatory character thus shown to belong to the suffering of Christ rendered much less certain, even if we suppose, as some have done without warrant, that the words "for the remission of sins" wanting in the other gospels, were an explanatory addition by Matthew, and not a part of the original statement of our Lord. Not to attach undue importance to the fact that even radical theologians like Beyschlag admit the clause to be a justifiable explanation of the words found with substantial agreement in all the three Gospels, by these words themselves a character at once sacrificial and expiatory is given to the Saviour's death. To those familiar with the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, and according to all the analogies of that system, "blood shed for many" could only mean blood shed to remove the guilt of many, to secure their forgiveness; blood shed, not to proclaim grace, but to mediate grace, thus blood shed, if we connect it with the new covenant, as the words of Christ do, to introduce and to found it, and not simply to announce and to ratify it. It is almost unnecessary to add, that it is in the highest degree instructive and important that this—the testimony to the objective efficacy of the sacrifice of our Lord is

enshrined in the very terms of the ordinance which is to be observed until He come.

Precisely the same character is given to the Saviour's work in relation to sin by the words, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29); words, not indeed spoken by Christ, but of which, as spoken concerning Him and with His knowledge, He must be regarded as giving His approval. The attempt to account for the use of the term, "the Lamb of God," by reference simply to the gentleness of Jesus, His meek and uncomplaining endurance of suffering and wrong, must be pronounced hopeless, especially in view of the significant addition "which taketh away the sin of the world". Whether the verb is translated "bearing" or "removing," the sacrificial reference in the statement as a whole is unmistakable. Accordingly the taking away of sin here must be regarded primarily as the removal of guilt, for this and not the removal of sin as a depraved and rebellious disposition in the nature is, according to the uniform mode of representation in Scripture, the proper object of sacrifice. It is not said in what way this is accomplished. It is reasonable to suppose that the bearing of the sin of the world is antecedent to, and the condition of, bearing it away. In any case a strictly expiatory character is stamped on the work of Christ by the words employed. The only serious difficulty, indeed, which the statement raises is not as to its signification, and the character in which it consequently presents the Saviour; it is as to the date in His ministry at which it claims to have been made, and the means by which at that early period the Baptist could have come to the possession of the knowledge of His vocation which it implies, Meyer, it may be stated, supposes it

to have been by special revelation made to him as the forerunner of the Lord.

Testimony is borne to the saving significance of the Saviour's death, though not expressly to its expiatory character in the words, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 14, 15). The lifting up here cannot well mean anything else but the lifting up on the Cross, the lifting up in death. The view of Wendt, that it means His being lifted up in the thought and feeling of mankind, the recognition of Him in His God-giving dignity, has so little in its favour, that one wonders to see it presented by an author of such ability. Understanding the unmistakable reference to be to the Saviour's death, it will be noticed that its object, as here presented, is not to influence the minds of men in the way of winning them from indifference or unbelief to faith—though this also has its truth—but to render faith in Him the instrument of their salvation. The Son of Man, according to the view of the subject given here, is lifted up, not that men might believe on Him, but that believing on Him they might not perish but have everlasting life. Saving significance is thus attached to the Saviour's death on the Cross, and attached to it specifically as securing life to those who believe on His name; and while it is freely admitted that nothing is directly said here of its expiatory character, it is difficult to explain this significance without taking it into account, something which it is all the more natural and justifiable to do, in view of the fact that in the immediate context men are represented as in a state of condemnation (John iii. 18); under the wrath of God (iii. 36). At the same time we are far from claiming

that the expiatory character of the Saviour's death, for which it seems natural to find a place here, exhausts the significance with which the Saviour may be regarded as investing it, in His use of the words before us. We may not forget, that the death was with a view to a new and higher life, that the lifting up on the Cross was in this case the natural, if not also the necessary, antecedent to His exaltation to the throne, with all the new possibilities of spiritual fellowship which this involved, and all the added power to bless men which it conferred (John xvi. 7 and ff.). Nor is there any contrariety in the considerations thus adduced, the explanation of the significance with which the Saviour's death is here invested. The one in truth fortifies the other. The saving power of the exaltation is most readily understood when it is regarded as bestowed on and exercised by Him, who through His obedient sufferings has made atonement for sin.

We find saving efficacy similarly ascribed to His death in another word of Christ which John has preserved for us: "And the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (vi. 51). There can be little doubt that the reference in this statement is to His surrender of Himself in death, though this has been disputed in recent times, among others by Wendt, according to whom (vol. ii. p. 181) this saving significance is viewed as coming to His "flesh," "only inasmuch as it is the vehicle of the Divine Spirit and the medium for men of the message which tends to life". But the employment of the term "blood," as well as "flesh," and the use of the future—"which I will give"—show the reference of the passage to be, as indeed the great majority of expositors admit, to the sacrifice of the cross. According to it this sacrifice has

saving efficacy. Christ's "flesh" is that which He "will give for the life of the world". It is not difficult to mark in the chapter from which this saying is taken a certain progress in the Saviour's teaching on the subject. In the first place, "the meat which endureth unto everlasting life" is that which "the Son of Man shall give unto" men (verse 27). Our minds are thereby led to think of the sayings of Christ (John viii. 51), of "the words of God" which He spoke (John iii. 34), of "the living water" which He proffered to the woman at the well (John iv. 10). Next, "the bread . . . which . . . giveth life unto the world" is "He which cometh down from heaven," not now the doctrine, but the Saviour Himself: "I am the Bread of Life" (John vi. 33, 38); and lastly, it is His "flesh" which is viewed as serving this great end, when given as it was to be given "for the life of the world" (verse 57). It is still the person of Christ to which saving significance is attached, that person, however, not now as living, as leading a life of natural beneficent activity, but as offered up in death on our behalf. It is thus the sacrifice of the cross, or, to keep still closer to the representation given, the Saviour as a voluntary sacrifice, to whom in the end we are pointed as the medium of life and salvation. It is only what might be expected, that different schools of thought should, in the absence of anything decisive on the point in the verse itself, construe in different ways the connection here affirmed to exist between the sacrifice of the cross and the salvation of men. By some it is regarded as consisting mainly, if not indeed exclusively, in the moral influence which so great a sacrifice, such a life so freely surrendered, could not fail to exert; by others as consisting even more in the power with which He is invested as the Risen One. To those, on the other hand, who

regard the Saviour as having borne explicit testimony to the expiatory character of His sacrifice in the words used at the institution of the Supper (Matt. xxvi. 28), no view of the connection could be looked upon as even approximately adequate which did not give a place, and indeed the first place, to this consideration. To them, to us, His flesh has life-giving power, because it is the flesh of One who has sanctified, *i.e.*, consecrated Himself (John xvii. 19) as an offering for His people's sake. His sacrifice mediates life and salvation, because not only offered for men, but offered to God, it has atoning power, it sets those who accept it in the new relation to God of reconciliation and forgiveness.

Before leaving this part of the subject, we may be permitted to pass from the words of Christ regarding it and to look for a moment at His acts. The institution of the Lord's Supper, the singling out of His death as the basis of the one commemorative ordinance which He established, while not perhaps incapable of explanation on the supposition that His last sufferings were simply the crowning manifestation of His love, is certainly more satisfactorily accounted for on the view that these sufferings were expiatory in their character, furnished the objective ground of the Divine forgiveness. Thus the existence of the institution confirms the doctrine, while the doctrine in turn serves to lend significance to the institution.

Objections are taken from the gospels themselves, two especially, to the view taken of the Saviour's words respecting His death, and especially to the propitiatory character attached to it on the basis of these words.

First, it is said, that to give this character to His death, to connect it in any such way with the exercise of the Divine forgiveness, is not so much to go beyond the general teach-

ing of Christ on the subject as to reverse it altogether. Now it is admitted that the Saviour often speaks of forgiveness without any reference to His own person or work—that it is simply to the grace, the fatherly love of God, that He ordinarily points men needing and seeking it. But in connecting the exercise of forgiveness by God with His own death, viewed as an expiation for sin, while there is no doubt an advance on His earlier and more usual teaching, there is no reversal of it so long as it is to this same fatherly love that the atonement of the Saviour is traced as its ultimate source. And to that theologians of all schools are agreed in tracing it in accordance with the oft-repeated testimony of Scripture (John iii. 16 ; Rom. v. 8 ; 1 John iv. 9, 10). It is true “it would be as great a contradiction of His whole preceding doctrine of salvation as could possibly be conceived” if His death were presented as a sacrifice by which “the angry God” was “transformed into the Heavenly Father”. But then that is to impute to those who see in the Saviour’s death an atonement for sin, a view of its operation which they would with one voice disavow. Indeed the representation is so unfair that one cannot but regret to find it made by a theologian like Beyschlag. Once more it is freely admitted that His “blood shed for the remission of sins” is absent from much of His teaching on the subject of forgiveness, is not found, for example, in the parable of the Prodigal Son, but it no more contravenes that than does His statement as to the necessity of regeneration in the third chapter of John contravene it.

Second, it is said, if the death of Christ has this transcendent importance attaching to it, if it is really the central moment in the Saviour’s redeeming work, it is difficult to understand the small and subordinate place which it holds



in His personal teachings, His silence regarding it in the Sermon on the Mount and even in many of His later discourses. It is natural that this difficulty should be felt. It can excite no surprise that it has seemed a grave one to many thoughtful persons. There are some considerations, however, which relieve it, if they do not remove it altogether. The teaching of the Saviour was obviously and avowedly progressive. He communicated truths only as His disciples were able to bear them (John xvi. 12), and He expressly stated that truth which they were unable to receive, even so late as towards the very close of His life, should be made known to them after His departure to the Father by the Spirit He was to send. What would it be more natural to find embraced in this subsequent revelation than fuller and more precise teaching as to the meaning of His death. Then the relation of fact and doctrine in the gospel is not to be overlooked here. In a very real sense, Christian doctrine is just Divine explanation of Christian facts. But evidently the fact must, in great measure at least, precede the explanation, that is, the doctrine. The death must be endured with all its mysterious agony, with all its moral grandeur, before its full signification can be disclosed. Those certainly were in no position to learn that significance who seemed incapable even of taking in the fact, when intimation of it was made to them beforehand again and again. Besides, if the view of the Saviour's sacrifice presented above be the correct one, if it looked first and most directly Godward, if it was a supreme act of obedience to God even before it was an overpowering manifestation of love to man, if it was first and before all an offering to God on man's behalf, with a virtual prayer for him at its heart, then another explanation of His re-

serve, or His reticence, regarding it comes into view. This reticence, not absolute, broken, as we have seen, by a few precious words which the Church has known how to treasure, becomes not only intelligible, it may even seem to be demanded, when, in laying down His life, the Son is regarded as primarily dealing with the Father in the matter of our salvation. In any case, it is a relevant reply to those who call attention to the meagreness of the Saviour's teaching on the subject of the atonement, if His death partook of such a character, that He came to achieve man's redemption rather than to explain its process; to make the atonement, rather than to give instruction regarding it. It is surely to mistake His work to make it consist exclusively, or even mainly, in the proclamation of grace, in the declaration, or even in the bestowal of forgiveness. He came to mediate grace—to effect forgiveness. The gospels, therefore, are primarily a record of a great redemptive activity on the part of the Saviour. He is seen in them making the atonement, the significance of which the Church was afterwards more fully to learn, and, what is still better, to prove.

#### IV.—ITS NECESSITY.

The necessity of His death is affirmed by the Saviour in express terms: "As Moses lifted up . . . even so *must* the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John xiii. 14, 15). We have already seen that the term "lifted up" is used here, as in John viii. 28; xii. 32, 34, to denote the Saviour's death on the cross. Such is its invariable meaning in the gospels. In the Acts, on the other hand, the same term is employed to designate His exaltation (Acts ii. 32; v. 31). The Saviour, in the passage cited, pro-

nounces the fact, almost indeed the manner, of His death to be necessary. How was it necessary, or rather, what was the necessity which the Saviour had in His mind when He made use of this term "must"? It is known that various considerations, some of them more or less problematical, have been adduced by theologians in this connection. We have only to do with those here to which Christ's own words seem to point. These appear to declare His death to be necessary.

1. In order to the fulfilment of prophecy regarding Him. Thus His words to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus are: "Ought not Christ (Behoved it not the Christ, R.V.) to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory" (Luke xxiv. 26). "And," to ground this "ought," "beginning from Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (verse 27). Again, to the disciples gathered on a subsequent occasion He spoke in a similar strain: "These are My words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, how that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the Psalms, concerning Me" (Luke xxiv. 44-46, R.V.). So also "the Son of Man goeth even as it is written of Him" (Matt. xxvi. 24, R.V.). According to these statements, the necessity of the Saviour's death, the obligation under which He was laid to suffer as He did, is one grounded to His mind in the first place in Scripture prediction. The rôle marked out for the Christ therein is one which just because He is the Christ He must fulfil. This necessity, however, it is plain cannot be the ultimate one. In truth, it is a necessity at all only in relation to another and deeper necessity on which it leans and of which it is the expression. To this the Saviour

appears to appeal in more than one statement. We are warranted by these statements, therefore, in saying that His death was necessary.

2. To fulfil the Divine purpose or decree of which the words quoted from the Old Testament Scriptures were the prophetic intimation. There seems to be a reference to this purpose in the words found in John, "This commandment have I received from My Father" (John x. 18), immediately preceded as these words are by the statement, "I have power to lay it (My life) down, and I have power to take it again". His dying, perhaps also His rising again, the former certainly, is thus represented as embraced in a command or mandate of the Father, and as obedience to the Father's will was for the Saviour a moral necessity, His death was in that sense necessary. The same idea comes still more explicitly forward in the words of Christ: "And truly the Son of Man goeth as it was determined" (Luke xxii. 22). The reference undoubtedly is to the appointment or determination of God. His death, proceeding from the hatred of His foes, and facilitated by the treachery of one of His own disciples, is in accordance, and is seen by Him to be in accordance, with this appointment or determination; and as the appointments or determinations of God are never arbitrary, we seem warranted in saying that the Saviour's death was necessary, not merely because divinely pre-determined, as it is here said to have been, but because in some way needed or at least fitted to meet great moral requirements inseparably bound up with man's salvation, and which underlie and ground the predetermination affirmed. What these requirements were, how far they are connected with the character of God as righteous, or with the inherent demerit of sin, or simply with its deep-seated

nature, the Saviour nowhere says. In speaking, however, as He does in these two passages, He has said enough to make it impossible for any one bowing to His authority to regard His death as a mere fortuitous issue to the conflict which He waged with evil, such as it is represented by some to have been.

3. To ensure conformity in the Saviour's life with certain great principles obtaining in the Divine administration of the world. A necessity of this character seems to be expressed in words already quoted: "Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory" (Luke xxiv. 26, R.V.). There appears to be here a recognition of the law of glory following suffering, exaltation reached through abasement, as needing to find its application even in His life. A principle of still wider range, death the condition of a fuller and larger life, is enunciated by the Saviour in this connection and with great emphasis and solemnity: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and *die*, it abideth by itself alone, but if it die it beareth much fruit" (John xii. 24, R.V.). Jesus Himself is thus not permitted to be an exception to this rule or law of growth, rather He is to supply its grandest and most impressive exemplification. He, too, must yield up His life in death, to the end that it may be reproduced in a numerous increase. The Son of Man must be lifted up, only thus can He draw all men unto Him. He must tread the path of suffering before them in order to lead many sons to glory.

It only remains to be said under this head that the necessity of which the Saviour speaks in the words quoted, and to which He bowed, was a relative and not an absolute one. It was a necessity which bound Him only if He entered

and as He entered into the purpose and plan of God for the salvation of men, and this He did with entire freedom. He willed to be the Saviour of mankind, and in doing so He willed, He freely chose, all which this involved. A necessity which should have robbed Him of His freedom in dying He expressly disclaims (John x. 18).

#### V.—ITS RESULTS.

1. To Himself: His exaltation to power and glory. This result of His sufferings does not come into such prominence in the gospels as in the Acts and the epistles; naturally not, but it is not entirely absent. We find it in a passage, already quoted oftener than once: "Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory" (Luke xxiv. 26). The entrance into His glory, the glory destined for Him, contemplated in these words as reached through the shame of the cross, and as a result of its endurance, is something confidently anticipated. Death is not to end His personal existence any more than it is to impair His influence. On the contrary it is to glorify the one and immeasurably to extend the other. The same result is forthcoming, in the form of a claim indeed, and not as yet an actual attainment, in "I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do, and now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was" (John xvii. 4, 5). It is His return to the throne, the resumption of everything He had laid aside in His "self-emptying," His complete emancipation from the limiting conditions of the earthly life; and yet, if His return to the throne, it is His return with a difference—His return in our nature, glorified indeed, but human still. It

is unnecessary, or at least ought to be unnecessary, to say how closely the exaltation of the risen Christ is connected with the accomplishment of the salvation of those who believe on His name—in the spiritual presence which it makes possible, in the intercession which it brings into exercise, and in the bestowment of the Holy Spirit which it ensures. Even the preaching of repentance and remission of sins in His name is connected by the Saviour, not with His death only, but with His resurrection as well (Luke xxiv. 46, 47); so that the lofty significance which the Apostles attach to the risen life of Christ (Rom. v. 9, 10; viii. 34; 1 John ii. 1, 2) finds its root in His own words regarding it. But if we have not entirely failed to apprehend the significance of the Saviour's exaltation, as it affects our own interests, we have been all but completely forgetful of its bearing on His happiness. There is still, it is to be feared, as much room as ever for the half-reproachful word, "if ye loved Me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father" (John xiv. 28).

To this head belong also the words: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. xxviii. 18). The reference may be primarily to the power necessary to give full effect to the work which He had begun on earth, that of man's redemption; the power to order and control the mightiest agencies in nature and in human society, so as to make them subserve its accomplishment. As here presented it is unlimited. This likewise is to be viewed as a result, the reward indeed, of His submission to death. Indeed it is an integral part of the glory into which He entered by the way of the cross.

2. To others. (a) Immediate and temporary; the consternation of His disciples. "All ye shall be offended

because of Me this night" (Matt. xxvi. 31), so different was the issue from that which they had hoped it would be, so little had the repeated intimations of the Saviour prepared them to meet it; the remorse and despair of the traitor: "Woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed" (Luke xxii. 22; comp. Matt. xxvii. 3-5).

(b) *Ultimate and permanent.* It is evident that there might be brought under this particular all the blessings of which He speaks in the gospels as won for men by His death. Some of these have already come before us, as redemption, remission of sins, life, in our endeavour to ascertain its significance, and others will come in for discussion under their appropriate heads. There are two or three consequences connected with His death on the cross which are signalised in the Gospel of John, to which attention may be fittingly called at this point. First, the disclosure of His true character, of His messianic dignity: "When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am He" (John viii. 28). The "lifting up" here, as elsewhere in the gospels, Wendt to the contrary, is the lifting up on the cross. The result affirmed is very generally regarded as one brought about by the manifestations of the Saviour's glory, consequent on His death, in His resurrection from the dead, the outpouring of the Spirit, and the miraculous endowments of the Apostles (comp. John xiv. 20). But there may be a reference also to the direct effects of death itself and especially of death when endured as was the Saviour's. In many instances among ourselves—too many—it takes death to open our eyes to the real worth of those whom we have long known, or rather with whom we have long lived without knowing them. So it was to be even in the case of Christ, His death



was to do more than His life to disclose His true character. Through His death, and after it, He was to be known to multitudes as He had never been even to His most appreciative disciples during His life. Then account must be taken of the manner of His dying—compelling the centurion who witnessed it to say, “Truly this was the Son of God” (Matt. xxvii. 54), and even those who had taken a more or less guilty part in accomplishing it to smite their breasts as they turned away from the scene (Luke xxiii. 48). Second, the gathering to Himself in true discipleship of all sorts and conditions of men: “I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me” (John xii. 32). Antecedent to His death, and notwithstanding His gracious and authoritative teachings, and His mighty and merciful deeds, Jesus was to the great majority belonging to His own country an object either of hostility or indifference, while to all beyond it He was all but absolutely unknown; but subsequent thereto all is changed. Lifted up on the cross, He is no longer simply the head of a small body of disciples, who revere His wisdom and His goodness; He becomes the observed of the world, He attracts the attention and the admiration of mankind, while He claims, and in instances without number receives, their trust and their homage. Some expositors, including Meyer, seem to find in this saying of Christ the notion of final universal salvation. But this is to give an absoluteness to the term “all” which it is far from uniformly having in the Scriptures, and is all the less allowable in the present case, that the effect is to bring this statement of the Saviour into conflict with other statements which came from His lips (John iii. 18; Luke xvi. 26; xiii. 3, 5), if not, indeed, with the general tenor of His teaching.

Looking back for a moment over the teachings of the Saviour on this subject, we see them to be at once full and significant. His death is announced beforehand in them as one of violence, as brought about by sin, the sin of those whom He yearned to save, as entailing suffering of a mysterious depth, and yet as absolutely voluntary, and as an act of supreme obedience to the Father who sent Him, even while an act of loving service, indeed of utter devotion to man. It is presented at the same time as the means of the deliverance of His people, the price of their redemption, the ground of their forgiveness. Just exactly how the former series of characteristics is connected with the latter, how being through sin it comes to be for sin, how being the consummation of obedience it comes to be the deliverance from guilt, the Saviour does not say. That is left to be determined, if determined at all, by the devout thought of the Church, acting under the guidance of the promised Spirit. Seen to be necessary to the fulfilment of Scripture and the accomplishment of the Divine purpose of grace revealed therein, His sufferings are at the same time confidently viewed as destined to issue in His own exaltation to glory and power, and in the enrolment under His banner of countless numbers of the human family. His cross is seen in advance to be a magnet to attract multitudes to Him.

Thus in the personal teachings of the Saviour regarding His death, we find the germ of all that is taught respecting it in the Acts and the epistles. Its significance is still further unfolded in these later writings, but it is not reversed or altered. There is development but there is not revolution. We see the emphasis changing; passing from the truth or doctrine to the Person of the Saviour, and from the

Person to the sacrifice, the death ; not as something distinct from the Person but as that which brings to light His highest qualities and His grandest service to man. There would appear to be really no good ground, even when limiting ourselves to the gospels, for a view of His death which excluding altogether the element of expiation would bring it simply into the same plane with His teaching and His example. The disciple who leaned on the breast of Jesus was but echoing the articulate thought of his Master when he wrote : " Herein indeed is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins " (1 John iv. 10 ; comp. 1 John ii. 1, 2). It is curious indeed to notice what difficulty even those who have begun by most rigorously excluding all ideas of expiation from the sacrifice of Christ, and keeping its significance strictly to that of moral influence, have in abiding on this ground ; how they are obliged in the end to admit in some form the objective value which they had disclaimed at the start. Wendt, for example, says (vol. ii., p. 246) " His obedience, ratified by His death, because of the actual value which it has in God's eyes, would also become an actually operative motive for God to ratify His gracious will in the case of His disciples," and Beyschlag used these words (vol. i., p. 155) : " His offering of Himself was a true atonement, that is, a reparation, an abolition of sin before God in the objective as well as the subjective sense," adding, however, " it is right to say, that this abolition is due to the sacrifice, not in the legal sense of bearing punishment, but in the dynamic one of removing sin in many and thus effacing it in the eyes of God ".

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

JESUS began His ministry according to Matthew (iv. 17) and Mark (i. 14) with the announcement "the Kingdom of Heaven," "the Kingdom of God," is at hand, and throughout the whole of it these expressions are ever-recurring ones on His lips. Even if the idea which they involve is not taken, as in our day many seem disposed to take it, as the all-inclusive one in the teaching of Jesus, it will be regarded by all as, at least, one of fundamental importance in relation thereto. The announcement of this kingdom as at hand, and the summons to repentance in view of its approach, had been the burden of the preaching of John the Baptist. We must not at once conclude from their use of the same term that the Saviour's conception of the Kingdom of Heaven and that of the Baptist were identical. We are concerned mainly with the conception of it entertained by Jesus. What did He understand by the kingdom, of which He speaks sometimes as at hand, and sometimes as actually come, and the conditions of membership in which He is at so great pains to lay down. The question is not without its difficulty, and yet a definite answer to it would seem indispensable to a right understanding of the work of the Saviour.

The references to it in the gospels are naturally very numerous. Their teachings may be exhibited under the following heads :—

I.—THE NATURE OF "THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN," OR,  
"THE KINGDOM OF GOD," FOR THESE ARE EVIDENTLY TWO NAMES OF THE SAME THING.


It is to be observed that we have no definition of it from Christ's lips, frequently though He makes use of the term. The reason may well be that the term was not a new one ; was already a familiar one among the Jewish people, whether coming, as some think, from the words found in Daniel ii. 44, and vii. 13, 14, or as simply suggested by their original constitution as a nation under the immediate government of God, in whose name their judges and kings were called to act and rule. In any case Jesus, as did John before Him, found the term, which formed the keynote of His preaching, in common use among the Jews. It was inseparably bound up with that hope of the Messiah which was the most distinctive feature in their religious life, and with whose coming the kingdom was to appear. The name itself seems to indicate that as the object of desire and hope to pious and patriotic Jews, the Kingdom of God was a state of society in Israel in which God's rule over the chosen people in righteousness should be heartily obeyed by them, and should be generously rewarded by peace and prosperity ; a king, God's vicegerent ruling in righteousness, and a people at once obedient and prosperous : in other words, a theocratic kingdom. The idea of the Baptist even may not, at least in the first instance, have advanced beyond this, and hence, perhaps, the doubts which assailed him when his ideal was so far from being realised. It is the explanation, moreover, of the endeavour displayed by the people (John vi. 15) to make Christ a King, that is, to get Him to assume temporal power.

It seems evident that this was not the Saviour's idea of the kingdom which He came proclaiming. Some indeed have ventured to say that it was His original conception of it, but that events occurring in His history led to His changing it. This view is not only without support from the narratives, it is contrary to their concurrent testimony. The Sermon on the Mount, in which the laws of the kingdom are laid down, the opening words of His ministry in Galilee—the terms under which He describes in them the nature of His work, the prominence which the Fatherhood of God receives in His preaching, the classes of hearers to which He more particularly addresses Himself: the poor, the openly sinful, the outcasts of society even; the almost entire absence of Jewish particularism in His teachings, the world-love of God which He unfolds as the source of His own mission, all point to a different conception in Christ's mind of the kingdom from that of the theocratic kingdom of ordinary Jewish expectation. Even the designation "the Kingdom of Heaven," that which is uniformly given to it in the first gospel, may well be regarded as involving a different conception of the kingdom from that ordinarily entertained. Its primarily ethical character seems to be implied in the name, especially when it is looked at in the light of the successive petitions in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come," "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven".

This indeed may be regarded as the transformation which the idea of the kingdom receives at the hands of Jesus. The conception even as entertained by at least the better portion of the Jewish people, under the guidance of Old Testament prophecy, embraced the element of moral renovation as well as that of political freedom and prosperity; the

element of righteousness as well as the elements of abundance and dominion, but with the great majority, at least, the latter had become the preponderating ; the kingdom was viewed mainly as external and political, and only in a subordinate way as spiritual and moral. With Jesus on the other hand, it is viewed as before all else moral, as having at its root a new relation of man to God, though destined also ultimately to transform the whole outward life of its subjects (Matt. v. 3 ; xii. 28 ; xix. 28). We may regard it, therefore, according to the Saviour's idea, as a kingdom constituted by the reign of God in and over human hearts, which have been won to allegiance by His grace, having its seat therefore primarily in the heart, and finding its subjects in all who have come to the knowledge and acceptance of God's love. It is not a political, scarcely even a politico-ethical society ; it is first and before all spiritual, having its domain in hearts influenced by Divine grace ; invisible, at least not signalling its presence by the symbols of earthly or secular power.

Still it is not to be resolved altogether into a spirit or an idea. Fairbairn in his *Studies of the Life of Christ* appears to have gone to an extreme in this direction, especially in the manner in which he differentiates it from the Church as an organised body. Little exception perhaps can be taken to his statement when he says of it (pp. 106, 107) : " It is in its nature and character heavenly ; comes by the will of God being done on earth as it is in heaven. Its being is real, but its ends are not yet realised, though the realisation is in process. The process is silent and spiritual and the end is the creation of righteousness in the individual and the race. The idea then includes as an essential element the notion of a



reign, the reign of God in men and through men over mankind. As such it must be on the human side inner, invisible. The nature of the king determines the character of the kingdom. Where authority is legal, it can employ legal processes and forms; where it is ethical and spiritual, it must be enforced through the conscience and obeyed by the spirit. An invisible and moral sovereign implies an invisible and moral reign." Most, if not all, of this statement is fitted to command our assent, but we are led at once to interrogate what follows, when he says (pp. 67, 68): "It (the kingdom) is neither an institution nor capable of being embodied in one. It cannot be identified with the Church. The two are radically dissimilar. *Ἐκκλησία* does, *βασιλεία* does not, denote an institution. The voluntary action of men can institute the former [?] but not the latter. The Church has, the kingdom has not, a formal or organised being. The one must be a more or less elaborate organism, the other can only live a spiritual and unembodied life." This statement contains much that is doubtful. Without entirely identifying the Church and the kingdom, the contrast here drawn between them is surely too wide. It is no more within the compass of human action to institute the Church than it is to institute the kingdom. The Head of the Church, equally with the Head of the kingdom, is an invisible and moral Sovereign, and His requirements also "are enforced through the conscience and obeyed by the spirit". Moreover, it is difficult to see how the ascription to the kingdom of a purely ideal existence is consistent with many of the terms under which Christ speaks of it. When He speaks of it as, in one sense at least, present "within you" (Luke xvii. 21), He cannot have meant in idea only. The very term "kingdom" sug-



gests the idea of society. There can be no kingdom, no king even, without subjects; and these subjects, in virtue of being subjects of the one king, are at the same time joined to one another. The love kindled in the heart, to which the kingdom owes even that "realisation" which is "in process," is a love which embraces men as well as God, and unites them in bonds which however invisible are not the less real. If, as is claimed, the kingdom has "no formal or organised being," if it "can only live a spiritual and unembodied life," it seems strange that Christ should have spoken of giving the keys of the kingdom (Matt. xvi. 19) to one of the Apostles. How should keys be applicable to such a purely ghostly existence?

Regarding the term then as sufficiently defined, we come now to notice some of its characteristics, as given in the gospels, by means of which its nature will be more clearly seen.

1. The fundamental difference between it and the dispensation by which it was preceded. Testimony is borne by Christ to this difference, "No man putteth a piece of new (unfulled) cloth unto an old garment; for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles; else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved" (Matt. ix. 16, 17). The statements are made to justify the absence from the requirements of the kingdom which He was founding of forms of righteousness, in the present instance, fasting, practised under the then existing dispensation. The first declaration will say that the righteousness involved in true discipleship, the righteousness of the kingdom, is not such as can be simply added on

to the traditional righteousness which He found existing. The new and the old were too distinct to be capable of combination into one harmonious whole. The attempt to unite them could only result in larger injury to that, the defects of which it was sought thus to cover. The gaping rent in the old garment is made wider in the end by patching it with the new or unfulled cloth. The second declaration on the same subject introduces, as so often with Christ, a new and complementary truth ; this, namely, that the new righteousness or the new life would be injured by any such attempt at combination. There is such originality, such force in the righteousness which He inculcates and inspires that it must be permitted to make its own forms. These alone can hold it. The new wine of His kingdom, the new spirit of the gospel, is such that the previously existing forms will be rent, if the effort is made to compress it therein, and, not only so, but the wine will be spilled. These declarations are enough to show how widely His conception of the kingdom, whose advent He heralded, differed from that of the external, national, politico-ethical kingdom for the establishment of which the Jews longed and hoped.

2. Its *unworldly* character. " My kingdom is not of this world " (John xviii. 36). We are warranted in saying that the reference here can only be to the kingdom which in the Gospels is usually designated " the Kingdom of Heaven " or " Kingdom of God ". Jesus can speak of it as His, because He was not only its herald, He was its Head. The kingdom may be said to have come to the earth in His person, and its destinies were linked with His course. Regarding it He says, by way of correcting the misapprehension of Pilate and at the same time vindicating His own lofty prerogatives, it " *is not of this world* ". While in, it is not of it. It has

its sphere, the scene of its development and operations in this world, but it has neither its origin nor support from it. It belongs in its spirit and methods, in the forces which it employs and in the ends which it seeks, to another sphere altogether. "In the Gentile political sense Jesus is not a King, in the Jewish religious sense He is" (Godet). His kingdom, accordingly, and so also the Kingdom of Heaven or of God, with which it is virtually identical, does not take rank with earthly or this world kingdoms. On the ground that the statement closes with the words, "Now (*νυν*) is My kingdom not from hence," that is, from the world, it has been argued that while it is true for the present that Christ's kingdom is not of this world, this shall not always hold good. But the "now" is to be taken in the logical, not in the temporal, sense.

3. Its mixed character in the present state. This is the teaching of the Saviour in the parable, first, of the tares and the wheat (Matt. xiii. 24-30). Until the time of the end, the kingdom is not to be present in any such form, as that the bad will not be more or less mixed up in it with the good, the tares, secretly sown by the enemy, with the wheat; and all attempts to effect a complete separation before the end could only result in injury even to the class which it was sought to benefit. To maintain, as Wendt (vol. ii, p. 351) does, that "A hard and fast organisation of His disciples, whereby they became a community, externally bounded and inwardly articulated, was not contemplated and predetermined by Jesus" is surely to take up a position only tenable not simply on the supposition that more than one recorded word of Christ is authentic, but also on this other, that the Church has all along mistaken the meaning of His action in separating the twelve. Even Wendt has to admit (p. 353)

that "Jesus certainly laid the basis of a future organisation of His disciples in the fact of His constituting the twelve as in a pre-eminent sense the continuers of His work for the period after His death". Of course, it does not at once follow that the parable before us has direct reference to this organisation. This is the sense, however, in which the Church has usually understood it, and in which it is taken even by one so little bound by traditional opinions as Beyschlag (vol. i., p. 184). The difficulty, or rather the impossibility, of meantime making any certainly just separation between the two classes found within this body arises from the external resemblances existing between them, as between the tares (*ζιζανία*), bearded darnel, and the wheat; the resemblance in the latter case being so close that till the plants reach the ear they cannot be readily distinguished. The disappointment at the unnatural intermixture, and the disposition to effect an immediate separation, are both natural. The parable at once admonishes against despair and inculcates patience. Unless, however, it has been misunderstood by Paul at least of the Apostles, it cannot be regarded as prohibiting the exercise of discipline in the case of open offenders, or even excusing its neglect.

This is the teaching of the Saviour, second, in the parable of the drag net, in which were enclosed fishes, good and bad (Matt. xiii. 47-50). The two parables are here also complementary. The difference between them would seem to be mainly this, that while the former makes prominent the present mixture of the good and the bad, in the latter the prominence is given to their future separation. It is to be noticed that the absolutely pure condition of the kingdom in another state is just as distinctly taught as its mixed one in the present. In the end the tares are to be completely

separated and burned, even as the destiny of the bad fishes is to be cast away. Thus freed from all foreign admixture the Kingdom of God shall be seen in its absolute purity.

## II.—THE MANNER OF ITS ESTABLISHMENT.

Having sought to define, after Christ, what the nature of the kingdom is, we are led to ask, How did He propose to establish it and, specially, what is His own relation to it?

1. Agreeably to the record in all the gospels, the first answer here must be, by preaching. The preaching of the kingdom with which, as we have seen, His ministry began must be regarded as the first step towards its establishment in the world. The name which He gives to Himself, "a prophet" (Mark vi. 4 ; Luke xiii. 33), the designation which His earliest followers, the first members of the kingdom, everywhere receive, "disciples," the large extent in which He devoted Himself to the work of teaching and preaching, the necessity under which He felt Himself laid to go from place to place preaching everywhere (Mark vi. 6 ; Luke viii. 1 ; x. 1), the express statement that "therefore" He "came forth" (Mark i. 38), all point to the importance which He attached from the first to the proclamation of truth, such truth as it had been given Him to disclose in the founding of the kingdom. This is the teaching likewise of the parable of the sower (Matt. xiii. 1-23). The seed, it is said, is the word of God. Spoken by the Saviour, it takes no effect in some who hear it, it finds no entrance ; in others it produces only a superficial and short-lived change of feeling ; but in the case of another class still, it not only effects a lodgment, but finding a prepared soil, a heart above all uncorrupted by insincerities, it yields large and permanent fruit ; and so far as this takes place, the

Kingdom of God may be said to arise, "the good seed are the children of the kingdom," the word spoken by Jesus becoming the generative principle of a new life.

The same truth would seem to be taught in John xviii. 36, 37, where Jesus in the act of asserting His Kingship, at once vindicates its reality and explains its distinctive character by saying that He "was born" and "came into the world" that He "should bear witness unto the truth". The words have pertinence only on the supposition that He conquers men, makes them His subjects, by the truth to which He bears witness. This truth is the sceptre which He passes over mankind, and where it touches those who are "of the truth" they bow to it, and acknowledge Him as King. The Kingdom of God or of Heaven, with which what Jesus terms His kingdom is virtually one, rises then, we are warranted in saying, on the basis of the truth which He declares, and by means of its declaration.

The attempt of Wendt (vol. ii., p. 97) to identify truth (*ἀλήθεια*) here with right, or moral rectitude, if successful, would of course do away with the testimony which the passage is said to bear to truth, in the sense of intellectual, objective truth, as the instrument, or at least one of the instruments, in the establishment of His kingdom. But the attempt can hardly be said to be successful. However, in some other passages the word may have the sense rather of moral rectitude, the disposition which leads men to do the right, than of objective truth, here it would obviously seem to be the latter, and the claim, therefore, is sustained by the words of Jesus to Pilate, that His kingdom is a kingdom of which truth is the sceptre, and of the establishment and maintenance of which the preaching of the truth is the means.

The claim is widely made in our day that the Fatherhood of God is the all-important truth in this connection. It is said to be, together with the sonship of man which it involves, the great creative truth of the kingdom. Assuredly it is a truth of profound significance in itself, and in relation to the society, whether we term it Church or kingdom, which the Saviour came to found, but it is not clear that this significance is exclusive as well as profound, that other truths spoken by Him simply take rank under and as deductions from this one, and have not therefore also the right to be termed generative truths of the kingdom. In any case it has to be said, not indeed as detracting from the significance of the Saviour's teaching on the subject, that this truth on His lips was not an absolutely new one. It had, like many other truths of the New Testament, its roots or its anticipations in the Old, but it was spoken with a new authority, it received a new emphasis, one may say a new significance, and was set in such new relations that it may be characterised as enunciated by Christ as a virtually new and a distinctively Christian truth.

2. In explaining the manner of the establishment of the kingdom, we must give even to Christ's own words a place to His death. This is not the point at which the discussion of the whole subject of the Saviour's death can come most appropriately in. But, without now anticipating that discussion, we may say that it has a vital relation to the introducing of the kingdom. At the base of that kingdom there is "blood" as well as "truth". Its foundation is laid in sacrifice, as might be expected, indeed, from its general character. Not until its Divine Head has laid down His life can it come in power. This is not said in explicit terms by Christ, but it is clearly implied in such statements

as those in John, especially when looked at in the connection in which they stand. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me" (xii. 32). "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (xii. 24). The former of these statements receives increased significance in the connection in which we are considering it, from the immediately preceding words, "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the Prince of this world be cast out"; the latter too from the context in which it is set: "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified". The whole thought, it will be seen, moves in kindred lines, and its general purport is, that the dethronement of the prince of this world, and the glorification of Christ as the Head of a redeemed and emancipated humanity, are to follow as the result of His death. The cross is viewed as at once a weapon (which is) to smite the hitherto victorious power of evil, and a magnet to attract to Him who suffers on it multitudes of willing subjects.

With these passages may be compared the closely resembling one: "When ye have lifted up the Son of Man then shall ye know that I am He" (John viii. 28). There can be little doubt that the reference here too is to His death, Wendt to the contrary, who, singularly enough, finds in the lifting up spoken of the recognition of Christ by men "in His God-given dignity". We are familiar with the power of death to discover to us unperceived excellences of character. We know the loved departed as, alas! we did not know them when they were with us here below. This unveiling power which belongs to death was to find its most striking exemplification in Christ's case. His death on the



cross, with the results to which it led, in His exaltation to the throne, and in the bestowment of the Spirit, was to give to men a new knowledge of Him, a knowledge of Him as the Son of God and Saviour of mankind.

His death, then, and not His preaching merely, has its place in relation to the introduction of the kingdom as an actual reality. Only through its endurance can the reign of God be established or re-established in our fallen world. Man's ruin would not be so great if truth spoken with heavenly sanctions could alone quell his rebellion.

3. There must be included under this head the whole personality of the Saviour. This embraces, indeed, the two previous considerations, but it embraces still more. The Saviour is more and greater than His word, more and greater than His sacrifice. The Kingdom of God comes to the earth in His person ; in virtue of what He is as God manifest in the flesh, as "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth". This is implied in the authority which He claims when He lays down its laws (Matt. v., vi., vii.), when He gives to Peter its keys (Matt. xvi. 19). It is implied in the kingship which He asserts (John xviii. 36), and in the manner in which He opens His ministry in Galilee (Luke iv. 21). When it is said, He "came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God" (Mark i. 14, 15 ; Matt. iv. 17), the words mean much more than they did on the lips of John. Taken in connection with the statement in Luke iv. 21, they can mean nothing less than the claim that the kingdom is coming in His person. He is not only its Founder, its Head ; His unique personality supplies the foundation on which it rests. He is Himself the chief corner-stone. The kingdom lives and moves and has its being in Him. The life which pulsates throughout it emanates from Him. The ideals



which it cherishes and which inspire it are but the faint reflections of His perfect character.

### III.—ITS PRECIOUS CHARACTER.

Here belong the parables of "the treasure hid in a field" (Matt. xiii. 44), and of "the merchantman seeking goodly pearls" (Matt. xiii. 45, 46). Both set forth under different figures the unspeakable value of the heritage which this kingdom constitutes, and to which he serves himself heir who becomes a true member of it. The parables differ in this, that while in the one the treasure is accidentally found, in the other it is expressly sought. They agree in teaching that no sacrifice is to be considered too great to ensure its possession, and at the same time that it is the discovery of its worth which supplies the motive to the sacrifice or the surrender of all that has been hitherto most prized.

The same truth is taught by the Saviour's words respecting John the Baptist, "I say unto you, among those that are born of women, there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist, but he that is least in the Kingdom of God (he that is but little in the Kingdom of God, R.V.) is greater than he" (Luke vii. 28 ; Matt. xi. 11, 12). Both parts of the statement, the unsurpassed greatness of John in the Old Testament, and his inferiority even to the least in the New, present difficulty. The meaning of the former can scarcely be, that in worth of personal character, or even in depth of prophetic insight, John was greater than Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Isaiah ; but rather this, that in *position* he stood above them, his mission as the immediate forerunner of the Messiah was one of greater distinction. If this is the proper rendering of the first part of the statement, it will go far to determine the meaning of the last. Its force,

when thus viewed, will be, not that in moral worth the Baptist, the fearless preacher of righteousness, stands beneath the least in the Kingdom of God—an almost incredible statement—but that “the ancient order of things and the new are separated by such a gulf that the least in the latter has a higher position than John” (Godet). To be in the Kingdom of God, as constituted by the person and the sacrifice of its Divine Head, and as inhabited by the Spirit which He bestows, is to stand on a higher plane, and to be in this respect therefore greater, than simply to stand upon its threshold, even though he who thus stands is one as great as the Baptist undoubtedly was. The meaning attached to the statement by Dr. Bruce in his valuable work, *The Kingdom of God*, differs a good deal from that now given. It is based on the view that John, while a strong, zealous moralist, was essentially a destroyer with reference to the actual religious life of his time. Strong in zeal, he was weak in love; strong in denunciation of evil, he was weak in patience towards the sinful, and, therefore, “any one in the Kingdom of Heaven, animated by its characteristic spirit of love and patient hope, is greater than he”. But even if this view could be accepted as explaining the last part of the Saviour’s statement, it is obviously inadequate as an explanation of the first, if, indeed, applicable to it at all. In any view of it, however, the statement is one which exalts the Kingdom of God and its privileges to a great height.

Comparing the teaching of the two parables, and that of the statement just considered, one may say that while the incomparable value of the kingdom of God comes to light in both, the reference in the former would seem to be to its value as conferring the blessings of salvation, forgiveness,

peace, eternal life ; in the latter to its value as involving a high type of character, as exalting personally its humblest subject. In the one, the man finds the treasures of the kingdom ; in the other, the kingdom sheds its glory on the man. In both points of view the kingdom of God is seen to be a boon of priceless worth.

#### IV.—ITS GROWTH OR PROGRESSIVE ADVANCEMENT.

1. The fact of this growth is taught in the parable of the mustard seed (Matt. xiii. 31, 32), and in that of the leaven (Matt. xiii. 33). The mustard seed, remarkable only for its smallness, grows when placed in the earth to be a large plant, or tree rather. The small piece of leaven pervades and gives its own character to the whole mass in which it is placed. Such is the Kingdom of God. Its slender beginning, so far from precluding its large extension, lays the foundation for and, to the Saviour's prophetic eye, contains the pledge of that extension. The confidence of the Saviour is thus shown in the irresistible advance and ultimate triumph of the new spiritual force which has come into the world with Him.

On the ground that leaven is generally used in the Bible as the symbol of corruption (Exod. xii. 15 ; Matt. xvi. 6 ; 1 Cor. v. 6, 7), some modern interpreters see in the parable of the leaven a prediction of the gradual and in the end complete deterioration of the outward visible Church. One need not hesitate to pronounce this view untenable. The two parables are spoken of the same Kingdom of God ; the one being descriptive of its extensive, the other of its intensive growth. To take the latter as a prediction, not of the transformation of mankind by the assimilating force inherent in the kingdom, but of its own gradual and in the

end total corruption, is to bring its teaching into direct opposition to that of the former, which under the metaphor of the seed and tree speaks only of certain, large and healthful growth, surely not of deterioration and decay. We are aware that some have taken this darker meaning as that of the second parable also, but in obvious defiance of the natural force of the language. The gloomy or pessimistic rendering of either parable or of both, is moreover at complete variance with the general tenor of Christ's teaching on the subject, as it is also with His express assurance, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi. 18).

2. The nature of the advancement of the kingdom is also taught by Christ. It is a growth. It is not an enlargement simply. It is not an example of accretion as in the coral; it is an example of growth as in a living organism, which the kingdom in truth is. No doubt there are accessions to the kingdom from without. It is recruited from the world, even as the tree draws the material of its growth from the soil and the atmosphere. But in the one case and in the other the enlargement is due to the assimilating force of the inhering life. The two parables before us present this growth under somewhat different aspects. The former gives us the inherent self-developing power latent in the kingdom; the latter the power which it possesses of penetrating and assimilating a foreign and yet not absolutely alien mass.

The same general idea as to the manner in which the kingdom advances, is suggested by the parable of the sower. "The seed is the word of God" (Luke viii. 11); or, transposing the terms, the word of God is the seed; that is, it is possessed of life, there is inherent in it a vital

principle, and to this vital principle the progress of the kingdom individually and collectively is due. It advances, not as a building, by stone being added to stone, but as a plant which builds itself up from sun and soil in virtue of the assimilating power of life. The secret of its progress is not from without but from within.

3. This advancement, in its earlier stages at least, is secret and unobserved. In reply to the question of the Pharisees, when the Kingdom of God should come, Jesus said, "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation : Neither shall they say, Lo here ! or lo there ! for behold, the Kingdom of God is within you" (Luke xvii. 20-21), or "in the midst of you". It would appear that the two last words of the statement, *ἐντὸς ὑμῶν*, are susceptible of two distinct renderings. If the first is taken, and they are rendered as in the Authorised Version and in the text of the Revised Version "within you," it is rather the spirituality of the kingdom that is taught, the fact that it has its primary and proper seat in the heart, and hence its attribute of invisibility, an attribute that must adhere to it throughout its whole course in virtue of the realm within which it has its seat. This was the view taken of the passage by Erasmus, Luther, Calvin, and among the moderns, Olshausen. If the second is taken, and the words are rendered "among or in the midst of you" as by Bengel, Meyer, Alford and the majority of modern interpreters, and in accordance with the marginal rendering of the Revised Version, it is the hidden and unobtrusive character of the kingdom, especially in its earlier stages—in its coming, which is implied. The latter seems distinctly entitled to the preference ; especially in view of the fact that by the "you" here the Pharisees must be meant, concerning whom it is difficult to think of

Jesus as saying that the Kingdom of God was within them. It will be noticed that the question is not, whether it is true or not in point of fact, that the Kingdom of God is within the believer, but was this, if true, the truth which the Saviour in the words quoted meant to affirm? Was this not rather in the light of the context the purport of His statement: You inquire when the Kingdom of God shall come and perceive not that in Me, its Head, in the works of healing which I do, in these disciples likewise, the kingdom in its beginning is already in your midst? It is thus the unobtrusive character of the kingdom, the circumstance that it does not force itself on the attention of mankind, does not appeal strongly to sensible observation rather than its spirituality, that is signalled in the words under review. Its beginning, its coming, whether in the race, in history, or in the individual soul, is such as can easily escape observation.

#### V.—ENTRANCE INTO THE KINGDOM.

The terms of membership or citizenship form the subject of a distinct chapter, but without anticipating what is to be said on that subject, there are one or two statements of a somewhat general kind which may be as well considered now.

1. Entrance into the kingdom is declared to be easier to some who were openly and even grossly wicked than to others who were at least outwardly moral. It was to the elders and chief priests that He said, "The publicans and the harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you" (Matt. xxi. 31). The announcement of the nighness of the kingdom by Jesus as by John was accompanied, it will be borne in mind, by the summons to repent. Only by the door of

repentance could the kingdom be entered. But the repentance was far more difficult to the Pharisee with his empty delusive show of goodness, with his self-righteous pride, or, worse than all, with his moral nature hardened by insincerities, than to some at least of the grossly but at the same time consciously wicked. It is not necessary to close our eyes to the power of sinful passion, the lusts of the flesh, to retain in their grasp those who have given way to their indulgence, but even that power presents a less formidable obstacle to repentance, and to faith in Christ, than the unsusceptibility to religious impression engendered by outward and heartless goodness. And so the woman who was a sinner finds herself shedding tears of penitence at the Saviour's feet, and receiving His great word of forgiveness, to the confusion and shame of the outwardly moral Pharisee whose interests in the kingdom and its blessings would seem to have gone no further than entertaining at table its unrecognised Head. Accordingly we find Jesus saying to the Jews of His day, "The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you," to whom as the covenant people it rightfully and in the first place belonged, "and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. xxi. 43). Similar is the purport of the parable of the marriage-feast (Matt. xxii. 1-10), and indeed of several other of the parables.

To the same effect are the words: "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven, but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness" (Matt. viii. 11, 12). The kingdom in this passage would seem to be viewed in its perfected heavenly state, which indeed is its true and proper form. To its felicities, to its blissful fellowship, many from remote and alien



quarters should be admitted, while the children of the kingdom, the Jewish people, for whom its blessings were primarily designed, should be cast out. The antithesis here, it is true, is a somewhat different one. It is one of race rather than of character. But the latter may well be regarded as in many, if not in all, cases implied. The moral susceptibility which is the necessary pre-requisite to faith in Christ, and so to admission to the blessings of salvation, should be forthcoming in the case of many of Gentile blood, notwithstanding their generally lower moral plane, while it should be found wanting in many, in most of the privileged Jewish race, because destroyed by a merely external obedience, or by positive insincerities of life and conduct.

2. The entrance is said to be made with a species of violence. "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and men of violence take it by force" (Matt. xi. 12, R.V.); to the same effect are the words in Luke xvi. 16. The meaning is not, as it has been taken by some to be, that men with hostile intent are subjecting the Kingdom of Heaven to force or violence, are pressing in on it as if to rend it in pieces, or to prevent others entering into it, a meaning which is quite unsuitable to the context, but that with gracious purpose men eagerly and impetuously lay hold on it, with the view of gaining possession of it. There is nothing in the gospel narratives to lead us to suppose that a disposition of this character was the prevailing one during any period of the ministry of Jesus. The terms employed, however, show that alongside of the indifference or the hostility which He so generally encountered there were instances in His experience in which it was exhibited. That there was need, or even room, for such violence must find its explanation in

the circumstance that the kingdom as preached by Him ran counter to so many of the cherished preconceptions of the Jewish people, preconceptions which could only be renounced by a species of inward violence when the counter attractions of the kingdom made themselves felt. The room and need for such violence, however, has a root not in Jewish prejudice only, but one still deeper in the fallen nature of man. It may well, therefore, be expected to be a permanent feature in the history of the kingdom.

#### VI.—ITS INDESTRUCTIBILITY.

This might well be taken for granted as a characteristic of the Kingdom of God ; at least it would be the natural inference from its establishment. If such a kingdom arise at all among men, if its foundation be laid in the incarnation of the Eternal Word, it cannot fail to be abiding. But this truth is at once too important and has too much against it in the appearances of things to be left to inference. It is the subject of direct and explicit statement. "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi. 19). The statement indeed is made respecting the Church (*ἐκκλησία*), being one of only two places in which the term—the Church—is employed by Christ, but the fact that in the very next verse the term "the Kingdom of Heaven" is used almost interchangeably with it, at any rate with no obviously different force, warrants us in applying what is here said to the subject under discussion, the kingdom. As to the statement itself very different meanings have been assigned to it. On the ground that the gate of the city was a common place of public gatherings, where judgment was given and plans formed, its force has been held to be, that the conspiracies

of the wicked one, the unseen forces of evil, should be unequal to its overthrow. This view must probably be abandoned. It seems most natural to regard the Saviour's meaning to be that the power of the kingdom of death shall not prevail over this kingdom. It shall maintain itself or be maintained by its Divine Head, in the face of the disintegrating forces to which all earth-born institutions have to yield. The gates of Hades which claim and irrevocably close on all merely human societies, shall never be able to claim, shall never be able to close on, the kingdom of which Jesus is the Head. The view taken by Meyer of the statement differs considerably from that now given, and is entitled to attention. According to him, the main, or rather, the only idea which the phrase "the gates of hell or Hades" connotes is that of strength or stability, and the meaning which emerges is that the Church, or the Kingdom of Heaven, is so securely established that the gates of Hades do not surpass it in strength, nay, when the kingdom comes to its perfected form, at the second coming of the Lord, the power of Hades itself shall be broken, and the grave shall be made to give up its dead. Even on this view the Saviour's words convey the assurance of the permanence, the indestructibility of the kingdom.

VII.—THE VARIOUS TIME-NOTES EMPLOYED BY THE SAVIOUR IN CONNECTION WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT AND THE EXISTENCE OF THE KINGDOM.

We approach here a point of great difficulty, one on which much diversity of view will be found to obtain in the interpretation of the words of Jesus.

1. There is a large number of passages in which the Kingdom of God is spoken of by Him as coming, as

near, as at hand, as something to be witnessed by those hearing Him, by the men of the then existing generation. "Repent," He said, "for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (Matt. iv. 17). The term (*ἤγγικε*) seems designedly chosen to denote nearness, in contradistinction not only from distance but from actual presence. Similarly, "The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark i. 15), where, along with the near approach of the kingdom, there is the additional thought of the conception of the time appointed by God and signified in prophecy for its establishment on the earth. A statement of similar purport is, "Notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, the Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you" (Luke x. 11). The note of time is made still more definite in "There be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the Kingdom of God come with power" (Mark ix. 1). The corresponding statement in Matthew is, "till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom" (xvi. 28); in Luke, "till they see the Kingdom of God" (ix. 27). In all the three gospels the declaration immediately follows one in which the Saviour has spoken of Himself as "Coming in the glory of His Father and of the holy angels," words which are very readily understood of His second coming, His coming that is to judge mankind and to wind up the world's history. This is the view taken of them by Meyer, Wendt and others. Its examination will fall more appropriately under the head of Christ's teachings respecting His second coming. It is sufficient to say now, that the attempt to identify the coming in glory which was to be witnessed by some of the then existing generation with the Parousia is opposed by several weighty considerations. First, it makes the Saviour chargeable with the gravest misapprehensions in

relation to the issues of His own work. Second, it appears to be inconsistent with the tenor of His teaching in the parables respecting the kingdom in which a long and varied history is presupposed with the statement that "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations" (Matt. xxiv. 14), with the establishment of the Church even (Matt. xvi. 18) and the lofty prerogatives conferred on it (Matt. xvi. 19; John xx. 23), surely very unnecessary if the kingdom was to come to so speedy and sudden an end. Third, it is not easily reconcilable with the statement: "Of that day, and that hour, knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark xiii. 32). And, fourth, it is not obviously consistent with the terms used in this very passage, "Shall not taste death until," etc.; the natural inference being that they would taste death *afterwards*; but on the supposition that the event indicated is the Parousia, they would really not taste death at all. Considerations like these compel us to take a different view of this coming of the Son of Man in His kingdom which was to fall within the experience of men then living. According to the one obtaining widest acceptance, the Saviour's words have reference to the great crisis in the world's history involved in the destruction of Jerusalem, the consequent overthrow of the Jewish system, and the wide and firm establishment of the Gospel, or, more generally stated, to His triumphant course when, as the result of His resurrection and ascension to the right hand of Power, the Spirit was poured out from on high. Easter and Pentecost were, in fact, the glorious beginnings of His victorious return. In these "some," those who had eyes to see, saw "the Kingdom of God come with power".

In any case, we have in the passages quoted, as in many others, a representation of the kingdom as near, as approaching, and thus, while not distant, as not yet actually come. The same note of futurity is attached to the kingdom in the prayer which Jesus taught His disciples, "Thy kingdom come" (Luke xi. 2).

2. Again there are many statements of Christ in which the kingdom is either spoken of as actually present or its actual presence is implied. There is the statement in Luke xvii. 21, already discussed, "The Kingdom of God is within you" (xvii. 21); that in Matthew, "If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then is the Kingdom of God come upon you (*ἐφ' ὑμᾶς*)" (xii. 28, R.V.). The force of the words in the latter quotation would seem to be, that in the expulsion of evil spirits from human beings of whom they had taken forcible possession, in the accomplishment of this through "the finger of God" (Luke xi. 20), the Kingdom of God was actually present, without those whom He addressed recognising the fact; the kingdom which was destined to supplant that of Satan was already rising on its ruins, compare the statement, "I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven" (Luke x. 18, R.V.). This is the implication, likewise, of most of the parables of the kingdom (Matt. xiii.). The thought lies at the basis of them, that the Kingdom of God has already taken its place on earth, that its blessings are offered to men, and have begun to be enjoyed by them. This is implied also in the admonition to seek first His Kingdom (Matt. vi. 33) in the statement, "Publicans and harlots enter into the Kingdom of God before you" (Matt. xxi. 31), and in that regarding John, "He that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he" (Matt. xi. 11). We have thus a different time-note altogether. According

to it, the kingdom is not soon to be set up, it is already set up, or at least it is being set up.

3. The Kingdom of God is spoken of in other passages in terms and in connections which imply its futurity, sometimes even its remoteness. Thus, when instituting the Supper, He says, "I will not drink from henceforth of the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God shall come" (Luke xxii. 18, R.V.). The coming of the kingdom in this case might be regarded as accomplished in the inauguration under the dispensation of the Spirit of the new gospel economy; but when we find the term employed in connection with the last judgment, "Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand . . . Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. xxv. 34), the mind is carried forward to a remote future. The kingdom is no longer present, it is not even near, it is prepared indeed but its actual realisation is still distant.

To account for this diversity of representation, it is not necessary to adopt the opinion entertained by some but not easily reconcilable, if reconcilable at all, with worthy views of the Saviour's person, that He changed His own estimate from time to time and under the light of experience as to the date of the rise of the kingdom; in this way, that He started with the idea that it was at hand, that His early success led Him next to regard it as actually come, but that the ultimate rejection of Him by the Jewish people led Him in the end to relegate its appearance to the future. There is no evidence in the gospel narratives to sustain such a view. The different ways of viewing the kingdom are not successive; they are synchronous, they are found side by side, in the same chapter, sometimes in the same verse (Matt. x. 15; Luke xviii. 17). All that is necessary is to recognise the

fact that the term, the Kingdom of God, is not always employed by Him in the same sense. The Kingdom of God, that is, the reign of God in the hearts of men with all its attendant blessings, being an ideal susceptible of different degrees of realisation and never in the present state realised other than imperfectly, could be spoken of by Christ when He began His ministry and during its course as in one sense near, and in another as actually present in His person and in His gracious workings in the hearts and the lives of men, while in its highest sense, in its perfected which is also its true and proper form, He had all through to speak of it as future, waiting to be revealed. The kingdom is there in its germ, in its Divine principle, where the poor in spirit, the meek, the pure in heart are found, but it is not there in its glorious manifestation, in the inheritance of the earth, in the vision of God, of which these graces are the assurance. Accordingly while there is difference there is no contrariety in the modes of representation employed by the Saviour in speaking of the Kingdom of God.

To sum up the teaching of Christ on this subject: The kingdom of God is an order of things in connection with which God reigns in hearts softened by His grace, and His will is done. In this form it came into the world with Jesus Christ and in His person. It rises upon the basis of His truth and of His cross, or on that of His person as inclusive of both. In one sense it is still future during His life and even after His resurrection and ascension; in another, it is actually present, but its nature, as spiritual, unworldly, is such that it can easily escape observation. At best it exists in the present state in a mixed condition. Evil, that which does not belong to it, which is its opposite, is meanwhile inseparably mingled with it; but it is not to



remain thus always. The obnoxious and alien element shall be completely separated from it in the end. Small in its beginnings, it is destined to a mighty increase ; and its growth shall be due to the assimilating power of the life maintained within it by its Divine Head. Its franchises, the blessings which it brings to its genuine subjects, are of the highest value. When men discover these they willingly sacrifice all for their attainment. Differing from all other kingdoms in its nature, it differs from all likewise in its destiny. These shall pass ; the gates of Hades shall close on them ; this endures, indestructible, imperishable—for ever.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### CITIZENSHIP IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

THE Kingdom of God, or, as it is otherwise termed, the Kingdom of Heaven, having been seen to be that society, whether actual or ideal, in reality both, in which God's rule is established within human hearts and His will done, it is important to determine what constitutes citizenship in it, and how that citizenship is reached, what its indispensable conditions are. In another form the question is, What are the constituents and the qualifications of Christian discipleship? for to be a disciple of Christ is to be a citizen of this kingdom. We are now to learn what answer the Saviour has to give to this question.

#### I.—THE CONSTITUENTS OF DISCIPLESHIP OR OF CITIZENSHIP IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

1. Following Christ. The passages in the gospels are very numerous in which this term is employed to designate discipleship: "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me" (John xii. 26); "Jesus said unto him (one of His disciples), Follow Me" (Matt. viii. 22); "My sheep hear My voice . . . and they follow Me" (John x. 27). It is obvious that by the use of this term, "follow," the Saviour does not so much designate a condition or qualification of discipleship as a constituent thereof, as that in and through which citizenship in the Kingdom of God is realised. As such, in view especially of its so frequent recurrence in the gospels, it is

most instructive both as to what Christ is in relation to His people, and as to what they are to be after Him. It implies, on the one hand, that He is before them in the whole path in which He would have them go, that He Himself has been and has done all that He would have them be and do ; and on the other hand, that to be disciples of Christ, citizens in the Kingdom of God, is to walk after Him, to be conformed to His example, to have the spirit of His life that of their lives, the ends for which He wrought their ends also. For it is not a temporary designation of discipleship, having its application only to those living in the same age and land with Jesus, though it was susceptible of a meaning in their case which it cannot have in others, but in its deepest signification it is tied down to no limits of time or space ; it sets forth that which is of the very essence of discipleship in all ages and under all circumstances. To be a Christian, a citizen of the kingdom which He "came preaching," is, according to the oft-repeated word of its Head, before all else to "follow" Him.

The connections also in which this requirement of discipleship is laid down in two of the passages quoted are instructive. In the former it is stated in immediate connection with the mention of His own death as necessary to the fruitfulness of His life, and with the assertion of the solemn truth, having its application, as it would seem, even in His own case, and therefore in theirs also : "He that loveth his life shall lose (loseth, R.V.) it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (John xii. 25). In the latter, the requirement is addressed to one who had qualified his proffer of service by the request, "Suffer me first to go and bury my father," and is accompanied by the apparently severe and unsympathetic word, "Let the dead

bury their dead," that is, let those who are destitute of true life bury their dead. The suggestion has been made that the words may mean, not that the person addressed desired to bury his father who was already dead and waiting burial, but that he desired to put off becoming a follower of Jesus until he should have buried his father who was still alive. Thus interpreted the words yield a good and relevant meaning, but the terms, "Suffer me *first to go* and bury my father," do not seem to favour it.

2. Obedience. "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven ; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven " (Matt. vii. 21). In the form in which it is expressed this might seem to set forth a condition of entrance into the kingdom rather than a constituent of citizenship therein. But when we pass from the form of the statement to its substance it is obvious it is rather an announcement of what a citizen of the Kingdom of God is, than of the manner in which he becomes one. He is a person who does, or whose aim at least it is to do, the will of God. It is to this that the whole work of redemption is designed to lead up, in the attainment of which its great end is reached ; obedience, the enthronement in the heart and in the life of the will of God, or, as the Saviour puts it in the passage quoted, "the will of My Father which is in heaven". The character of this obedience, its governing motive, its intimate connection with the personality of the Saviour, as not its exemplar only, but its inspiring principle, will be discussed in a chapter devoted to the subject. Here we have to deal with it simply as an essential element in true discipleship. This it is seen to be in the light not only of the saying of Christ now quoted, but of many others too numerous to quote, for example : "If ye

continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed" (John viii. 31); "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me" (John xiv. 21); "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother and sister and mother" (Matt. xii. 50).

Obedience to the will of God is thus made by Christ to be the very essence of discipleship. A much lower significance is sometimes assigned to it, as when its main value is regarded as being an evidence of a gracious state. But in the light of these and other words of Jesus we perceive that it does not simply attest discipleship, it constitutes it. It makes the citizen of the kingdom, and is not simply the mark by which he is known. The man has a place in the kingdom, is a true member thereof in virtue of the fact that he obeys its Divine Head. He is not simply distinguishable thereby as such. The deepest, the real, significance of obedience lies herein; not that it is the attestation of true discipleship, but that it is its essence. It is the former, indeed, only in virtue of its being the latter. Evangelical teaching, it must we think be admitted, has sometimes been at fault here. It has not always given to obedience the high place which is assigned to it by the teachings of Christ. The purely ethical gospel which is heard in too many quarters to-day may be regarded in part as a reaction from this defect.

It should be added, that the obedience which is thus constitutive of discipleship or citizenship in the Kingdom of God, is in its nature inward and spiritual, involving therefore real love to the law in which the will of God is expressed. This is the truth which the Saviour emphasises when He said, "I say unto you, that except your righteous-

ness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. v. 20). The serious defect of the righteousness of the Pharisee was its purely external character, the absence from it of any true inwardness, its want of heart. It is not enough to say that it was legal. The law which obeyed in a way was apprehended in its letter, rather than in its spirit. Obeyed thus, its underlying spirit, that which lent it all its significance and its sacredness, was often violated in the very act of obedience. As a consequence the righteousness attained, if righteousness it could be called, was outward, formal, heartless, often insincere, and as such called forth the constant rebuke of the Saviour. So far from constituting its citizen a subject of the kingdom, it often formed through its external but heartless proprieties the most formidable barrier to entrance therein (Matt. xxi. 31).

It may be observed, in conclusion here, that this latter constituent of discipleship is scarcely distinguishable except in form from that first named. At least the two are mutually involved. Obviously, to follow Christ is to obey God, and to obey God is to follow Christ. The two form one and the same grace of conduct, only differently viewed. Together they constitute the quality or course of action in which citizenship in the Kingdom of God is realised.

## II.—THE CONDITIONS OF CITIZENSHIP IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

1. Regeneration. The words of the Saviour to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again (anew, R.V.), he cannot see the Kingdom of God," and "Except a man be born of water and of the

Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God" (John iii. 3, 5), compel us to regard this as the primary condition. The whole question of regeneration will be discussed fully hereafter under its appropriate head. It is enough at this point to call attention to the fact that Jesus Christ, the Head of the Kingdom, speaking to one who had greeted Him as a teacher sent from God, declares that the indispensable condition of participation in it for him and for all men lies, not merely in a new knowledge, but in a new birth, in the implantation of a new life, effected immediately by God's Spirit. The expression "born again" is indeed figurative, but the figure is inapplicable and misleading, unless the change denoted be one of this radical and thorough kind, one going down to the very roots of the nature and issuing therefore in a complete change of disposition and action. The necessity of this change in order to entrance into the kingdom, or, if the term "see" in verse 3 be taken in its more proper sense, in order even to its apprehension, is affirmed in the most direct and absolute terms. This arises from its nature. It was not to be a mere external organisation, with worldly privileges and splendours, a sort of glorified earthly kingdom, such as Nicodemus, in common with other Jews, probably expected. It was to be one inward and spiritual, and of one respect also outward and visible, yet this only as the natural and appropriate expression of the new life imparted. Hence the necessity in order to participation in it of a new nature within the man, a new and correspondent ethical state. The Kingdom is one which rests on truth, not force (John xviii. 36), which appeals to love, not fear, whose Head is invisible and whose highest blessings are inward and spiritual; its subject must be one who can respond to these

sanctions, who can exercise faith in this Divine Head, and who can appreciate that order of blessings. The door into the Kingdom therefore for fallen man, whether Jew or Gentile, is through an inward and radical change, wrought immediately by the Spirit of God. This failing, the words of Jesus are, ye "cannot see," ye "cannot enter into the Kingdom of God".

The statement, it will be noticed, is quite general. "Except a *man* be born again," and if this did not settle the universality of its application, if it might still be thought that it held good only of men entertaining the worldly views and expectations prevailing among the Jews of that age, or of men who had lent themselves to gross immoralities, the reason assigned, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," would forbid the limitation. The change is made necessary, according to this highly significant word of Christ, not by peculiarities of opinion or of character belonging to the age or to the individual, but by the common attribute of human nature, "the flesh," and which without the vivifying and cleansing power of the Spirit can only reproduce itself.

The same truth comes to light in Matt. xviii. 3, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven". The term employed here (στραφήτε) designates in reality the same fundamental change; only it is viewed here more on the side of the result ("turn," R.V.) than on that of the inward and generating principle (γεννηθῇ ἄνωθεν), and then one feature of the new nature is lifted into view, childlike receptivity and trustfulness. To the same effect are the words "of such," little children, or those of any age, who possess the childlike disposition "is the Kingdom of God" (Luke xviii. 16).



The condition of admission into the Kingdom of God, with which we have been dealing, is one supplied to the man, rather than contributed by him. Regeneration is a change wrought within him immediately by the Holy Spirit, and, strictly speaking, without his co-operation. There are, however, other conditions specified by Christ, connected with and growing out of this primary one, in the accomplishment of which he is directly active. To this class belong repentance and faith.

2. Repentance. This is placed in the most direct connection with admission to the kingdom by the very terms in which the Saviour opened His ministry, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (Matt. iv. 17; Mark i. 14, 15). That merely fleshly nature, which, as has been seen, makes the new birth, or the implantation of a new life necessary, is not inactive; it has its natural outcome in worldly views of life and in selfish and sinful action. He who would enter the kingdom must leave behind these views of life, that course of action—must turn his back on his former self, or, keeping more closely to the meaning of the word used by Christ, must change his mind, and change it, not with reference to this and the other detail of conduct, but with reference to the chief end of life, to that which is man's chief good. What is that chief good, as Jesus defines it? It is righteousness (Matt. vi. 33); the fulfilment of the will of God in disposition and conduct. To repent is to break with the worldly view of life, and with the worldly life which grows out of that view, and to make righteousness the supreme concern. It was the summons of John, in view of the approach of the kingdom before it was that of Jesus. But on the lips of the latter it has a far deeper and more inclusive meaning just

because the righteousness of the kingdom, which must ever determine the scope, nature and demerit of the sin which has to be forsaken, was something far higher and far more spiritual in His view, and accordingly the exhortation to repentance is addressed, not only to those who had lived grossly immoral lives, but quite generally and to all (Luke xiii. 3, 5). We may say it was very specially addressed to those who were satisfied with and proud of their formal and far from true righteousness, and in their case, as all unready to comply with it, the call took the form of a warning of judgment (Luke xi. 32). The terms in any case in which the summons is couched, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," provide for no exceptions, nor is there anything in the circumstances under which it was uttered to suggest that it was of local or temporary force. The subsequent teachings of the New Testament—those both of the Acts and the epistles, point in the contrary direction. These all run in the strain of the discourse of the Apostle of the Gentiles at Athens: God "now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts xvii. 30). Repentance is thus seen to be an indispensable condition of entrance into the Kingdom of God, one universally demanded. The nature of the kingdom as one in which God's authority is to be owned, His will obeyed, and obeyed from the heart, is such that repentance presents itself to us as almost more than any other exercise, the actual passing into the kingdom.

To the same purport with this first summons of Jesus is the parable of the Pharisee and the publican (Luke xviii. 9-14). It is true there is no mention made in it of the Kingdom of God, but it is only the term that is wanting. The parable shows us the man in the very act of entering

into the kingdom, who "smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner".

3. Faith. We have to deal with this grace here simply as a condition of entrance into the Kingdom of God. Its fuller treatment is reserved as the subject of an independent chapter. The Head of the kingdom is Jesus Christ. It rises on the basis of His authoritative teachings as the revealer of the Father, of His life, as the actual embodiment of its principles, and of His death as an act of supreme devotion to the will of God and to the interests of men. The ultimate ground for action within it is simply what He says, what He is and what He has done. The devotion, the surrender of all that is dearest, which it demands has no inspiring and sustaining motive of sufficient force, apart from that which is furnished by His example and His person. Accordingly faith in Him is everywhere throughout the gospels, but more frequently and with greater emphasis in the fourth gospel than in the other three, required in those who would enter the kingdom (Mark i. 15 ; Matt. xviii. 6 ; Mark xvi. 16 ; John iii. 15, 16). Even when He was on the earth, visible to human eyes, this faith was necessary to the reception of saving blessing, was imperatively demanded. Indeed it was in a manner the sum of all requirement, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent" (John vi. 29). It is still more obviously necessary now that the heavens have received and retain Him. Only through its exercise can fellowship with Him be maintained, can the life be received and sustained which He imparts. The kingdom is there, and the man is within it, when He, its Head, is enthroned in the affections and served in the life, when His will is the supreme rule of action and His sacrifice is the inspiring motive ; but all

this clearly involves faith, and that not simply of a general character, but specifically faith in Christ, faith in His teaching as Divine, in His life as the truly blessed one, in His person as the Son of God.

The necessity of faith in order to a place in the kingdom and participation in its blessings is seen by approaching the question from another point of view. The kingdom is one of grace, not of law. It comes, not so much making demands of those to whom it is announced, as offering them benefits, bringing near to them a love which is freely bestowed. Its ultimate aim, indeed, is righteousness, but its first word is forgiveness. It has rewards, it is true, but they are not of the legal kind ; these, too, are the bestowments of grace. The disposition, then, which the kingdom demands above every other is that of trustful receptivity, imaged, as the Saviour has said, in the little child. This furnishes not only the suitable attitude over against the Kingdom, it is the indispensable one, if the Kingdom is to be entered and its blessings enjoyed (Matt. xviii. 3). But what is this receptivity at bottom, but just faith ; not indeed in the sense of intellectual assent, but in the far deeper sense of spiritual surrender to grace and to the realm of truth and duty which it unfolds. In this sense, and for this reason, it is a condition of entrance into the kingdom.

The intensely moral character of the faith of which Jesus Christ and the blessings which He mediates are the object is implied in the function ascribed to it. It is not something apart from the man, standing in no definite relation to his general character. So far from this being the case, it is closely connected therewith. The character determines the faith or the absence of it, just as the faith develops and exalts the character. This is a point on which the Saviour

very frequently insists (John iii. 20 ; v. 44 ; vii. 7 ; xviii. 37) ; indeed there is scarcely any part of His teaching more distinctive than that which relates to this subject. The faith which goes out to Him, and which has the power to transfer the person exercising it into the kingdom, is not reached as the conclusion of an argument, or a series of arguments ; it is far more the summation of a life.

These, then, repentance and faith, involving and growing out of regeneration, may be said to be, on Christ's authority, the indispensable moral or spiritual conditions of entrance into "the Kingdom of God". It is in obvious harmony therewith that Paul, speaking of his ministry, speaks of it as summed up in "testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts xx. 21). The whole three graces are intimately connected. However related in the order of nature it seems impossible to distinguish them satisfactorily in the order of time. If it is true that the new life imparted in regeneration signals its presence in repentance and faith, there appears to be equally good ground for saying, that in the act of believing in Jesus Christ, the new life is imparted.

Coming after, but in subordination to these great moral conditions of discipleship, or of entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, there are other requirements laid down by the Saviour, which occupy if not a lower at least a somewhat different plane. These may perhaps be designated qualifications of discipleship.

### III.—THE QUALIFICATIONS OF DISCIPLESHIP OR OF CITIZENSHIP IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

1. Self-denial. "If any man would (*θέλει*) come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow

Me" (Matt. xvi. 24 ; comp. Mark viii. 34 ; Luke ix. 23). Thus according to the mind of Jesus, to follow Him, that is, to be a disciple, is to consent to self-denial, to agree to the sacrifice of what is dear, after His example and for the Kingdom of God's sake (Luke xviii. 29). Attention may be called to one or two points in connection with this statement. First, this requirement of self-denial is made according to all the three versions, in view, not of the actual following of Christ by a man, but of his even forming the purpose to follow Him. The term "will" in the Authorised Version expresses in this instance not futurity but volition. Properly the statement is, "If any man wills to come after Me". Thus the purpose to follow Christ, however honestly entertained, is futile, unless it is accompanied by preparedness to accept suffering and to consent to the sacrifice of what is dear. Second, its striking point in the statement is the terms employed—"take up his cross," to designate this self-denial. The expression, indeed, is a very intelligible and natural one to us, who look back on the event of the crucifixion, and to whom the cross on which Jesus suffered is the supreme example of self-denial. But the peculiarity, which is often overlooked, is this, that the terms were employed at a time antecedent to the crucifixion—at a time thus when, if the cross was already in His eye, it was certainly not in the eye of the disciples to whom the terms were addressed. The peculiarity becomes all the more striking that the cross was not a Jewish mode of punishment but a Roman one, reserved for the worst class of criminals. It would almost appear that in this instance the terminology which was to be the permanent designation of Christian self-denial, was framed in advance of the event which was to give it its significance. It will be seen that we

have given to the words "take up his cross" the figurative significance in which it is everywhere employed in Christian speech. Wendt claims that they should be taken not in a figurative but in a literal sense, and that viewing the cross as in the time of Jesus the Roman instrument of execution, the saying of Jesus virtually means, "Whosoever follows Me not to the scaffold, cannot be My disciple," but as one of the Evangelists (Luke ix. 23) speaks of this cross as being taken up "daily," it is difficult to see how the literal sense can be maintained.

The necessity for the self-denial thus inculcated would seem to have two grounds. (a) The course to be taken in following Christ, that is, in conforming the life to His example, is one directly opposed to many of the strongest tendencies of the fallen nature. To follow Him accordingly is to do violence to these; involves the obligation not only to offer resistance to their indulgence, but where it is possible, even to extirpate that which gives them their so fatal power. "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell" (Matt. v. 29, 30; so also xviii. 8, 9; Mark ix. 43, 47). It is not necessary to give a literal force to these words, which the nature of the case indeed forbids, to make their lesson a very solemn and penetrating one, as spoken too by Him who knows as none other the greatness of the dangers that are threatened. Even if figurative, they must be regarded as denoting renunciation of an absolute and altogether painful kind, of

that, whether in the person or in the life, which causes the candidate for the kingdom to stumble and fall. The term "cast them," that is, the offending members, "from thee" must not be overlooked. Sometimes, in a fit of remorse or of shame, men cut off the causes of offence, but instead of casting them away, making a clean and permanent break with them, they place them where they can be resumed at pleasure. (b) The necessity for self-denial arises also from the supreme devotion which Christ claims at the hands of His followers, or, to keep nearer to the line of His teaching, from the absolute singleness of aim demanded by the nature of the kingdom of which He is the Head. It comes to embrace, therefore, that which is neither in itself sinful, nor tending to sin, but which impedes the service which He requires, or interferes with the singleness of aim required. Thus among the things to be surrendered, in spirit if not in actual fact, are those domestic affections and relationships which, so far from being unholy, are, in many instances, the strongest supports of goodness. Here belong the words: "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me" (Matt. x. 37), and still stronger, though to the same effect: "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father and mother, . . . yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke xiv. 26). Some, as De Wette and Bleek, regard the force of the word "hate" here as "love less"; others, as Godet, would take it in its strong and proper sense. In any case the renunciation demanded is of the most striking character. It cannot mean less than this, that the disciple of Christ, he who would make good his citizenship in the Kingdom of God, must hold himself ready at any moment to surrender at Christ's bidding, and



for the sake of the kingdom, that which is the object of an affection, not only legitimate and natural, but in its place sacred. The actual surrender, it may be understood, will only be required when the relationships specified interpose an obstacle to the service which the Saviour asks, or to that single-hearted devotion with which the Kingdom of God is to be sought. The words furnish a striking testimony to the absolute devotion which the Saviour claims. From whom else could we allow such a claim? And as in the demand for self-denial, it is quite general: "If *any* man come to Me, and hate not his father and mother" (Luke xiv. 26); "If *any* man would come after Me, let him deny himself" (Matt. xvi. 24, R.V.). As Jesus looked around upon the men and women of His day, He could find no reason to exceptancy. And so still; there is among us no nature so fully attempered to pure and gracious ends that in making good its place in the kingdom it will have no call to exercise self-denial; no life so happily circumstanced that it may be expected to yield the service which the interests of the kingdom demand without sacrifice of what is dear.

It cannot surprise us to find wealth, whether of money or lands, as that which takes so strong a hold of the human heart, singled out by Jesus as in certain cases to be unconditionally surrendered. The final word of Christ to the virtuous and lovable youth who came to Him with the question, "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" is "If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me" (Matt. xix. 16, 21), and, when the counsel was declined, His word to the disciples is "that a rich man shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of

Heaven" (verse 23; Mark x. 23-25). It seems safe to say that the renunciation prescribed on this occasion, renunciation not in spirit only, not in the sense of ceasing to trust in riches, but in the sense of actually parting with them, is not one universally or even generally demanded. There is no good reason to suppose that Jesus regarded the possession of earthly goods as incompatible with citizenship in the kingdom, and therefore as everywhere to be foregone by those who would enter it. No doubt there are incidental sayings such as that in Luke vi. 20 which seem to attach a value to poverty as such. But these are quite consistent with the retention of earthly goods by those who possess them, and indeed such retention is implied in that faithful use of the earthly riches entrusted to any one (Luke xvi. 10-12), by which he was to show himself worthy of the true riches. We conclude, therefore, that the demand to surrender them was made in this particular case because He who knows what is in man saw in their possession an attachment which would be fatal to genuine discipleship. It may be remarked in this connection that, while the same test is not applied in all cases, the fitness for discipleship of most persons, if not all, is tested at some point and at some time. It may be at the beginning of the Christian course, or at some later period; it may be in the readiness to sever a cherished friendship, to forego a coveted distinction, to accept a keenly felt reproach, or, coming nearer to the case in hand, to refuse an offered but not quite clean gain. Who can count on escaping the test in some form and at some stage? Happy he who recognises its presence and its significance, and who unlike this youth has the courage and the self-denial to stand the test which is applied. This requirement of renunciation takes the broadest form in the

words, "So, likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke xiv. 33). What Jesus must be regarded as demanding of the candidate for discipleship in this saying is the forsaking in spirit always of earthly possessions, that is, the ceasing to love them; and the forsaking them in fact under certain circumstances, that is, their actual surrender.

(c) It is necessary to add that the necessity for self-denial and self-sacrifice as a condition of entrance into the kingdom does not rest solely on the presence in man of a fallen and sinful nature, and the antagonism existing between its passions and preferences, and the aims and interests of the kingdom. This necessity would appear to be a fundamental law of the kingdom (Matt. x. 39; xvi. 25; Mark viii. 35; Luke ix. 24; xvii. 33), from the operation of which even its Divine Head was not exempted. The same principle, "He that loveth his life shall lose it" (John xii. 25), is reaffirmed by Jesus in immediate connection with, and as in part at least explaining, His own career of suffering and death. The lower self must be renounced in spirit if not always in outward fact before the higher self—which is the true one—can be gained. Only by its sacrifice is the natural life transformed into or replaced by the life which is spiritual and eternal. Thus self-surrender—the surrender not alone of the self that is positively sinful, but even of the self that is simply natural and not sinful—is the law of the kingdom; the condition of all highest attainment in it, and a law to which even He who is the Head of the kingdom submits; nay, which finds its loftiest and most striking exemplification in Him. It is a profound observation of Lange that this saying of Christ carries with it the judgment of Hellenism; for what do we see in Greek civilisation but human life

cultivated with the view of maximising happiness and altogether withdrawn from the law of sacrifice?

2. Closely connected with the foregoing is the quality of decision or whole-heartedness. The necessity of this, as a prerequisite of discipleship, is brought into view in more than one word of Christ. Attention was called to it at a very early period in His ministry. We find it already laid down, and indeed more than once, in the Sermon on the Mount. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. vi. 24; Luke xvi. 13). These masters obviously represent different and even conflicting principles; the attempt to serve both therefore must result in failure. This is the direct assertion, but the underlying truth is that to the disciple, the citizen of the kingdom, its interests must be the supreme interests, and that they can only be effectively promoted when they are made such. The evil is not in the presence of other interests in the life, but in the place they are permitted to usurp. "To possess money and property," says Luther, "is not sin, if only thou does not suffer them to become thy master, but on the contrary compellest them to serve thee, and art thus their master." It is substantially the same prerequisite to discipleship which is enforced in another verse of the same passage, "But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matt. vi. 33). The words cannot be regarded as laying down the order of time in which the earthly and the heavenly are to be sought; the latter "*first*" and the former only thereafter. Their force rather is, make God's kingdom and righteousness your first concern, in subordination to which everything else is to be sought. The righteousness of God here is not,

as even Luther has made it, the righteousness which is imputed to the believer, the righteousness of faith, but righteousness of life, personal righteousness. The statement implies some intimate connection between this righteousness and the kingdom, while on the other hand it does not identify them. This connection is thus viewed by Tholuck in his *Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount*: "This end (fellowship with God) is not attained by any man as isolated and alone, but by each one solely as a member of that organised body of the Kingdom of God, the perfection of which is referred to in the Lord's Prayer". But to return to the main truth which the words under review were meant to enforce; the Kingdom of God, if sought at all, is to be sought as the supreme end, and thus with the decision, the whole-heartedness, which comes from an undivided aim. This single-mindedness, this absolute simplicity and therefore decisiveness of aim, is rightly regarded as the perfection—perfection of motive rather than of conduct—which the Saviour contemplated when, addressing the young ruler, He said, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast" (Matt. xix. 21). In His eye it is obviously not a mere ornament of Christian character, as we are apt to regard it, it is an indispensable requisite of citizenship.

It is precisely the same truth which is taught by the words of Jesus to the man who came proffering discipleship, but putting in the claim to be first permitted to make a visit to his home: "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God" (Luke ix. 62). Thus, under a very familiar figure, the necessity for the quality of single-heartedness is enforced. Even in the simple matter of drawing a straight furrow, the divided eye, the momentary look backward, will result in

failure. It will be even so with the advancement of the Kingdom of God in the hands of a disciple or would-be disciple with a divided heart. A decisive impulse without after thought is the requisite to Christian service, certainly to Christian service of the highest kind.

3. There is still another qualification or prerequisite to discipleship which finds a place in all the three synoptical gospels ; that of open confession. "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven" (Matt. x. 32-33 ; Mark viii. 38 ; Luke xii. 8-9). It seems as if we must recognise a distinction here between the earlier and the later periods of the Saviour's ministry. During the former, any open confession of Him was discouraged. Silence even was imposed on one and another, in regard to the works of healing He had wrought. This course may well have been dictated by the desire to keep down the hostility of the ruling classes, and thus to avert the premature ending of His ministry. During the latter, on the other hand, when His Messiahship had been openly proclaimed and the sufferings which it involved announced, the open confession of Him is invited, and the denial of Him before men is visited with severe threatening. One can hardly speak of this, however, as an independent condition of discipleship. It is really but the other and outer side of that faith which we have already seen to be one of the great spiritual conditions, or, rather, the great spiritual condition, of entrance into the Kingdom of God. This faith, we have seen, is one which has Jesus Christ, the Head of the kingdom, for its great object, and now we learn that it must be a faith which has the courage to

confess Him before men, which is not ashamed of Him and of His words "in the adulterous and sinful generation" in the presence of which He found Himself when He came to earth. Attention may be called to the form of the requirement in the original, all the more that it does not appear in the text of the English version, whether Authorised or Revised. The literal rendering is, "Every one who shall confess *in Me* before men". The words "in Me" may be regarded as denoting the spiritual realm in which the person making the confession finds himself; in other words, as designating the vital union to Christ and confiding rest in Him out of which the confession springs. As to the mode in which the Saviour contemplates the confession as being made, it will be readily understood that it cannot have been exclusively of an oral character. There were open to the disciples then, as to Christian men still, modes of confessing equally unmistakable with that which any form of words can constitute, and sometimes far more impressive. In any case, the truth stands out with undoubted certainty. It is open and not secret discipleship which the Saviour demands. He will have from His followers such a depth of devotion as cannot brook concealment. And here, as in all other cases, His honour and their good are closely and inseparably linked together.

The teachings of the Saviour on this subject may be briefly summarised. Citizenship in the Kingdom of God or, what is equivalent thereto, discipleship, is constituted by the following of Christ, the having the life animated by His spirit and conformed to His example, or, what is in effect implied, by an obedience to God of an inward and gracious kind. It has as its essential condition regeneration, the new birth issuing in repentance and faith, the one

determining the attitude of the man to the sinful or simply natural past ; the other supplying the sustaining and inspiring principle for his future life ; and it finds its crowning excellences, or rather its indispensable prerequisites, in self-denial, in whole-hearted decision and in open confession of Christ by word and deed.



## CHAPTER IX.

### THE RELATION OF CITIZENS OF THE KINGDOM TO THE WORLD.

IT may be taken for granted that Jesus contemplated such a relation as existing and as destined to continue during the whole course of the present dispensation. Principal Fairbairn in his *Studies in the Life of Christ*, insists strongly on the purely ideal character of the Kingdom of God, making the distinction between it and the Church to be altogether radical. Dr. Bruce, on the other hand, while claiming that "the Kingdom of God in one view of it is an ideal, hovering in heavenly purity above all earthly realities, and not to be sought or found in any existing society, civil or ecclesiastical," admits at the same time "that the new Christian society should be practically identical with the Kingdom of Heaven". The interchange of the terms "My Church" and "the Kingdom of Heaven" in the Saviour's words (Matt. xvi. 18, 19) seems to justify fully their practical identification. The truth is, the Church equally with the kingdom has its ideal form to which no actual entirely corresponds. The true Church is there and there only where Christ lives and reigns within the heart by His Spirit, where His authority is recognised, and His example followed, and in every such instance the kingdom is there, and to the same extent and effect. In any case the citizens of this kingdom are contemplated in the gospels as possessing a real and not simply an ideal existence. They are men and women leading the common earthly life. The spiritual change, in  
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virtue of which they become members of the Kingdom of Heaven, does not terminate their connection with the world. They are continued in it for a longer or a shorter period, as contemplated in the intercessory prayer, "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world" (John xvii. 15). The question is, therefore, raised as to what their relation to the world is to be. This is presented to us in the teachings of Jesus under various aspects.

#### I.—THE RELATION IS ONE OF INTERMIXTURE.

This feature of the relationship may be dismissed in a few words, as it has been virtually discussed in a previous chapter. It is the truth taught in the parable of the tares and the wheat (Matt. xiii. 24-30), and of that of the drag-net (Matt. xiii. 47-50). Contrary to what might have been expected within the kingdom itself, which must here be comprehensively viewed, those who do not in any true sense belong to it, who do not share its spirit and aims, and whose final destiny is separation, are to exist alongside of, and undistinguished from, its true members. Obviously these embrace two classes; those who belong at once in reality and in external appearance to the world, and those who bear by the act of others or by their own profession the Christian name. In the parables before us there does not appear to be any recognition of this distinction. Some, no doubt, would be disposed to regard the tares, the bearded darnel, which in the earlier stages of its growth has so great a resemblance to the wheat, as finding their counterpart in nominal professors, but this is a precarious, certainly a not clearly tenable, position to take up. The commingling element as viewed by Christ, and as we know it to be in fact, is wider than Church mem-

bership. The world in its widest sense and the children of the kingdom are to live an intermingled life till the time of the end. It is not difficult to see that the important ends are subserved by this commingling, in relation both to the one class and to the other. It supplies a healthful discipline for the true citizens of the kingdom, while it is the essential condition of that beneficent influence which, as we shall see, they were meant to exert on the world. In any case, the Saviour does not encourage the attempt at present separation. He forbids it as at once dangerous and impracticable. "Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them" (Matt. xiii. 30).

II.—THE RELATION IS TO BE ONE OF OPPOSITION. WHILE THERE IS TO BE INTERMIXTURE OF THE TWO THERE IS NOT TO BE FUSION. THEIR DIFFERENCE IN NATURE FORBIDS IT. THIS OPPOSITION IS OF TWO KINDS.

1. There is an instinctive mutual antagonism. It is this of which Jesus testifies: "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own, but because ye are not of the world . . . therefore the world hateth you" (John xv. 19). First, as to the meaning of the terms. It is customary to regard the words, "of the world," as denoting *derivation* of being, in this case ethical being, from the world. It is doubtful whether the New Testament usage of this and similar expressions will justify this view. Probably nothing more is denoted than simple adherence. To be of the world is to belong to it, to possess its nature, to share its aims, irrespective altogether of the source whence this worldly character is derived. To those who can be so characterised, the

genuine disciple cannot be an object of love. The testimony of Jesus is, that as possessing a nature essentially different, one whose very existence is a virtual rebuke and reproach, he must be to them an object of positive hatred. The antagonism is instinctive, not always conscious, but always real. It could only cease by the citizen of the kingdom becoming "of the world," that is siding with the world, displaying a worldly nature and pursuing distinctively worldly aims. Then "the world would love him" because he had come to be "its own"; the verb employed (*ἐφίλει*) designating, as Westcott has observed, the love of nature and not that of moral choice (*ἀγαπᾶτε*). To the same effect is the statement in John xvii. 14. The same view of the relationship, that of instinctive antagonism, is involved in the words: "Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves" (Matt. x. 16). It belongs to the very nature of the one to attack, and, if possible, to devour the other. The metaphor, indeed, must not be pushed too far. The wolf cannot be changed into the sheep, but the worldly character can give place to the unworldly one; but till this transformation is effected, in the mind of Jesus there can only be the instinctive antagonism of essentially opposite natures.

Not less striking expression is given to this antagonism in the words of Jesus recorded in Matt. x. 34-36, and in the corresponding passage in Luke's gospel (xii. 49-53). In the latter the words run: "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay, but rather division" (*διαμερισμος*). It cannot be His purpose to deny that peace and not strife was the ultimate aim, as it should be the final result, of His mission, but He declares herein that the very opposite would be its immediate effect. Conflict and not concord should ensue. His truth should become a sword to

cut many of the closest bonds which unite men together, if indeed also a power to knit others holier and more lasting. But for this, indeed, the change, the transformation wrought by Christ, had not been so deep reaching as it has been thus seen to be. As it was, "two humanities," says Godet, "were henceforth to be in conflict in every nation, under every roof. The thought profoundly moves the heart of the Prince of Peace, as appears in the words, 'I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I if it be already kindled?'"

2. Active and intentional persecution on the world's part. This is only the natural outcome of the essential diversity of disposition and character. The antagonism is mutual; the disciple can no more love the world than the world can love the disciple; but the persecution, the infliction of suffering and loss was to be from the side of the world only, and if it has ever been otherwise, it has been, not in pursuance of, but rather in opposition both to the spirit and the letter of, the Saviour's teaching. The hatred affirmed to exist was to display itself in active hostility. Religious disability with the accompaniment of physical torture was one of the forms which it was to assume: "They will scourge you in their synagogues" (Matt. x. 17); "they shall put you out of the synagogues" (John xvi. 2). Conscience even should lend its sanction to the infliction of suffering in the extreme form of death itself, and under circumstances in which violence was done to the tenderest affections of nature: "The brother shall deliver up the brother to death" (Matt. x. 21, 22); "Yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (John xvi. 2; comp. Matt. xxiv. 9-10). The words bear striking testimony to the consciousness which Jesus entertained of the deep and essential antagonism in which the doctrine and life inaugu-

rated by Him stood to the governing principle of His age, and, indeed, of unregenerate nature in all ages. Nor has that consciousness been belied by the history of Christianity from the beginning downwards. Its unique and uncompromising claims, notwithstanding the love which is at its heart, have not ceased to call forth the resentment of those who feel themselves condemned by these claims.

### III.—THE RELATION IS ONE OF BENEFICENT INFLUENCE ON THE PART OF THE KINGDOM OR OF ITS CITIZENS.

1. Unintentional and arising from the very nature of things. The moral qualities which belong to the members of the kingdom, the virtues inherent in true discipleship, are such that they cannot fail to exert a beneficent influence on the world, even apart from any direct effort towards this end. This natural and undesigned influence is characterised as (a) Preservative: "Ye are the salt of the earth" (Matt. v. 13); that is, it serves to keep society from that moral decay and corruption towards which, in virtue of the principles of the fallen nature, it is ever tending; in a measure even to promote its healthfulness. The obligation becomes, therefore, a very imperative one, on the part of those to whom a function of this high character is assigned, to preserve with the utmost diligence their own savour. This obligation is motived in the passage, however, not so much by the consideration of what the world must lose, if it is neglected, as by that of the hopeless and worthless condition into which in that case they themselves must fall—hopeless. "Wherewith shall *it* (not the earth, but the savourless salt) be salted?" or, figure apart, how, from what quarter, shall those who through slackness have become unfaithful to their appointed task recover again their

lost efficacy? and worthless: "It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men". (b) Illuminative: "Ye are the light of the world" (Matt. v. 14). In this case the influence is positive, while in the former it was more negative, and it is of the loftiest and most far-reaching character. His disciples, with special but by no means exclusive reference to the Apostles, were to discharge to humanity a function kindred to that which the sun discharges to the earth. This function we may regard as fulfilled, not simply by the transmission on their part of the truth received from Christ, but also very specially by the presence in them of the gracious qualities learned from Him. The words are, not Ye have the light, but "Ye are the light of the world". No doubt, in the absolute sense, He alone is the light of the world (John i. 4, 9; viii. 12). In a subordinate, but very real sense, however, they too are its light, as reflecting the rays of truth and goodness received from Him. (c) Transforming. The kingdom of heaven is likened to leaven (Matt. xiii. 33), the property of which is to permeate the mass in which it is placed, and to assimilate it to its own character. Happily, it is not evil alone which is contagious; goodness too, when sincere and pronounced, has the tendency inherent in it to reproduce itself in those brought within its observation. This is the very highest and most beneficent form of influence exerted by the citizens of the kingdom on the world around, and it is exerted all the more effectively when it is undesigned.

2. Intentional and coming as the result of active effort. "Let your light so," that is, as the light on the lamp-stand, "shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father, which is in heaven" (Matt. v. 16).

This injunction supposes effort directed towards the attainment of the end contemplated, which is, though not formally, yet virtually the good of mankind. According to it, His disciples were not to seclude themselves from their fellowmen, not to retire into obscurity ; they were to remain in the open, where any light of truth or of goodness emanating from them could reach those who were involved in darkness. The light had been communicated to them for this end. Accordingly, the main endeavour must be, not so much to preserve it from going out, as to make it irradiate as wide a realm of the darkness as possible. As a city set on a hill, as a lamp placed upon a stand, they were so, that is, in like manner, to let their light shine. Much more, however, is implied in the precept than the prohibition of concealment. It was a call to see to the light's burning, therefore to feed it with the oil of grace, and to remove anything in the life itself, rather than in the outward circumstances, which would hinder its shining. This done, it could not fail to shine in virtue of its own proper character, and shine all the farther and the more effectively that there is no effort, as if by waving the light around, to make it shine. The result would be—surely a most gracious one for the beholders—their being led to glorify their Father who is in heaven. It only remains to be said that the intermediate words, “that they may see *your good works*,” make it apparent that the light whose shining is contemplated as attended with this result is the light of Christian goodness, the light of truth, indeed, but of truth embodied in the life rather than of truth taken on the tongue.

It is the same kind of beneficent influence, that, namely, resulting from intentional activity, which comes before us in



the words "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matt. v. 44). Here it is not mankind at large that is contemplated as sharing the beneficent influence, but that portion which might be supposed to be farthest removed from any participation therein; enemies, and those of the most pronounced and even abusive character, such as the evil nature prompts us to hate, and custom if not law permits us to punish. The citizen of the kingdom is to close his heart against hatred of these; he is even to open it to love, and to hold himself ready to bestow needed good on those who have treated him despitefully; an exercise of benevolence which just because it transcends nature affords the more decisive evidence of sonship with God, "for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. v. 45). It is the bestowment of temporal good mainly that is contemplated in the words under review, but the same high authority requires the disciple to seek to promote the spiritual welfare of mankind, especially by communicating to them the knowledge of Divine truth. "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations" (Matt. xxviii. 19). The beneficent influence on the world which has resulted from the course of action here enjoined though coming far short of what it might have been, has been and is obviously both wide and permanent.

But in discharging the function of seeking to benefit mankind, the disciple of Jesus is to act with discretion: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs; neither cast ye your pearls before swine" (Matt. vii. 6). The reference here may well be regarded as being to the truth of the gospel, the gracious message of the Kingdom of God, and not simply

to certain aspects of the truth supposed to be invested with an unusual degree of sacredness. The whole truth relating to the kingdom, the love which it reveals, the blessings which it offers, the destiny to which it points—all is holy, all is precious. Jesus warns His disciples against speaking it without regard to the receptivity of those addressed. To offer the treasure of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to men who are appropriately symbolised by the dog of eastern cities, often running wild and feeding for the most part on garbage, or by the sow, an unclean animal according to Jewish law; to men who through their impurity of heart must misunderstand and despise it, is not only of no use to them, but entails the risk, first, of the profanation of what is holy, "lest they trample them under their feet," and second, of the provocation of needless and dangerous hostility, "and turn again and rend you".

Surveying the whole teaching of Jesus on this subject, we perceive that according to it the Kingdom of God and the world were to continue to exist alongside of each other, intermingled but not combined, not lost the one in the other, that in virtue of their opposite principles and characteristics they should exist in a state of mutual antagonism, that the kingdom must ever condemn the world, the world ever hate and persecute the kingdom, but that in manifold ways, of design and without design, the kingdom should be a blessing to the world, that in particular it should arrest its tendency to corrupt decay and shed the light of truth and of goodness into the midst of its darkness.

Such in substance was the picture which Jesus drew of the immediate future of the kingdom in its relation to the world. How far it was meant to apply, not simply to its initial stage and the struggles connected therewith, but to

its future course, when it had through these struggles established its right to exist, it would be difficult to say. The two stages are certainly in some respects unlike. We can see that bitter and passionate hostility must have been the characteristic of the former. No idea so new and revolutionary as that of the kingdom, as presented by Jesus, could win a place for itself in the thought of mankind, no force, at once so unworldly and so strong as that which Jesus originated, could assert for itself a place in history without encountering fierce resistance. It is conceivable that, when this was once accomplished, the antagonism should not disappear indeed, but become less acute, and that without the citizens of the kingdom becoming unfaithful to its principles. Such at least has come to be the case. Those who may be supposed to belong to the kingdom, to have their lives shaped by its principles, have less to suffer from the world than Christ's words might lead us to expect, and the world, on the other hand, shares less obviously in the preservative and transforming influences of the kingdom. And yet even in our day only great ignorance or culpable prejudice would deny that genuine, thorough-going discipleship still exists, and that where it exists it both encounters the hostility of the world and confers unspeakable blessings on the world.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD IN MAN'S SALVATION.

SOVEREIGNTY is or implies supreme power. The sovereignty of God is His supreme power, exercised not arbitrarily or without reason, but exercised for reasons which are often not disclosed, and the wisdom and justice of which in any case none are permitted to challenge. This absolute sovereignty is obviously a Divine prerogative. It is God's right and His only to do what He pleases, and His character, His moral perfections are such that what He pleases cannot but be wise and righteous. Perhaps the most striking recognition of this sovereignty is that found in the words of Christ: "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (Matt. xi. 26).

The sovereignty of God in the matter of man's salvation is exemplified according to the teaching of Christ in the gospels in several respects.

#### I.—IN WHAT MAY BE TERMED ITS ORIGINATION.

Man's salvation is not self-originated, any more than it is self-accomplished. It is the work of the Saviour, and He is the gift of God. The initiative is not man's but God's. The great text here of course is, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). By a considerable number of commentators, indeed, including Erasmus, Neander, Tholuck

and Olshausen, this statement is regarded as a reflection of the Evangelist and not a continuation of the Saviour's words to Nicodemus. Several considerations are adduced in favour of this view, such as the tense of the verbs, "loved," "gave," and the epithet "only-begotten" used also in John i. 14, 18, and in 1 John iv. 9, thus in each instance by the Evangelist. Other considerations, however, and still weightier, lead us to regard the words as spoken directly by the Saviour Himself. The transition from the teaching of the Lord to the reflection of the disciple thereon would surely be otherwise and more strongly marked than by the particle "For"; and the discourse to Nicodemus could scarcely have stopped short of some reference to the love of God as the ultimate explanation of that descent of the Son of Man into the plane of human life of which He had spoken. Besides, it would seem strange that that statement which more than any other is an epitome of the gospel, should come from the pen of the disciple and not from the lips of the Master Himself. Taking the words therefore as those of Christ, they are His testimony to the truth, that man's salvation, viewed as deliverance from perishing and being put in possession of everlasting life, has its origin in God, its ultimate source in His free and unmerited love. They present to us the work of human redemption at what we may term its fountain-head, at a point at least higher than which we cannot ascend, and that is seen to be the love of God, a love of which Jesus Christ is so far from being the procurer that His mission into our world is its result, and a love of which mankind at large, "the world," is the object. To distinguish this principle from that complacent affection of which Jesus Christ is the object and believing men in Him, it is by some German theologians termed the grace-

will (*Gnaden-Wille*) of God. God, we are told, passed by the angels that fell. He took hold of man. He gave His only begotten Son to redeem man. Why? We cannot say, It was an act of grace and of sovereign grace, we can only say, So it seemed good in His sight.

It is hardly necessary to say that this is very far from being the only statement of Christ which presents the work of human redemption as originating with God and indeed with God the Father. The many passages in which He is spoken of as sending Christ (John iv. 34 ; v. 23 ; ix. 4), as giving Him power over all flesh (John xvii. 2), as giving all things into His hand (John iii. 35), all point to the same conclusion. They all imply that the initiative in the salvation of men is with God, and with God the Father ; and that this initiative is the work of grace, and of grace acting in an altogether sovereign way, a way which challenges our gratitude, even while it refuses to be judged by our reason.

## II.—IN WHAT MAY BE TERMED THE APPLICATION OF THE WORK OF REDEMPTION.

Attention may be called here in the first place to the words of Christ : " No man can come unto Me except the Father which hath sent Me draw him " (John vi. 44). As the statement previously considered (John iii. 16) bore testimony to the agency of God in the origination of the whole work of redemption, so this statement bears testimony to the indispensableness of the same agency, in order to its taking effect in the actual salvation of individual men. Even such love as is disclosed in the gift of Jesus Christ, even such provision as is made for man's sore need, remains ineffectual without the operation of the power of God. No

man comes, no man can come, to the Saviour in the way of personal faith and self-surrender without what is here termed the drawing of the Father. But what are we to understand by this drawing? Obviously it must be something consistent with the freedom of him who is its subject. No man is saved or can be saved against His will; as Bernard says: "*Nemo quippe salvatur invitus*". Rather it must be said, that if man is entirely free in any determination, it is in that one in which he makes choice of Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour and Lord and makes surrender of himself to His will. All idea, therefore, of constraint on God's part, as of reluctance on man's, must be kept foreign to the thought here. This consideration, however, does not exclude the view of the passage taken by Bezu, Lampe, if not also. Calvin, according to which the reference in Christ's words is to what has been termed irresistible grace, for those who take this view maintain as strenuously as any the freedom of the sinner in making choice of the Saviour. In other words, the view which identifies the "drawing" here with what theologians have termed irresistible grace is not to be ruled out on the ground that this were to deprive man of his liberty and reduce him to the place of a mere thing in the matter of his salvation.

But it is not therefore the correct view of the passage. Even Augustine does not adopt it. The context points almost indubitably to a different meaning. It is only necessary to notice what the course of the Saviour's thought is when He goes on to illustrate and establish this drawing. It runs as follows: "It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto Me"

(John vi. 45). The "drawing" therefore, without which no true approach to the Saviour is regarded as possible, is being "taught of God," is hearing and learning of the Father. The reference, therefore, is to no either mechanical or magical influence exercised by God. Plainly it is to one which does not only leave room for human self-activity, but which demands it. We are "taught of God" as we listen to His voice, and resist the sins against conscience which dull the ear for it. Still the Saviour's words bear testimony to a positive operation of God on the hearts of men, empowering them to that exercise of faith by which the soul is united to the Saviour. Elsewhere, no doubt, He contemplates faith or the refusal of faith rather as a matter of human volition: "Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life" (John v. 40). But here He testifies to a direct Divine influence as being indispensable to the rise of genuine faith in Christ. The agency of God is thus seen in the carrying out of redemption not less than in its origination. It is pronounced by the Saviour to be at once indispensable and determinative—indispensable: "Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My Father" (John vi. 65); determinative: "Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me" (John vi. 45). And this agency, while not exerted in an arbitrary manner, is nevertheless sovereign, and one must surely say in the light both of the teaching of Christ (Matt. xi. 25), and of the obvious facts of history, distinguishing.

Attention may be called before leaving this part of the Saviour's teaching to the terms—"He who sent Me"—under which God is spoken of as drawing men to Christ. The sovereign act of love in the sending of the Son by the



Father is thus brought into close connection with the enlightening and attracting influence exerted by the Father in those to and for whom the Son was sent. "Both these Divine works," says Godet, "correspond with and complete one another. The happy moment, when they meet in the heart, and when the will is surrendered, is that of the gift on God's part and of faith in man's."

Testimony is borne to the same truth in the terms under which Christ again and again speaks of believers, as given to Him by the Father. The expression comes into special prominence in the seventeenth chapter of John, but it is not confined to that chapter. It is already found in John vi. 37: "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me, and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out". The use of the neuter singular to express in this passage those represented as given to Christ presents them as a definite, concrete whole, and has no doubt helped to lead to the view that the giving here referred to is that by the Father in eternity of the whole body of believers in every age to the Son to be by Him redeemed and saved. This view has been already shown to be untenable. The tense even in the passage before us, "giveth," that is, is giving, would seem to preclude such a meaning. It seems to be almost beyond possibility of doubt that what is meant is that agency of God, whether in the form of providential arrangement or of gracious influence, by which one after another is moved Christward, is disposed to faith in His name. Thus the giving is scarcely to be distinguished except in form from the drawing and the teaching spoken of in later verses of the same chapter and already discussed. Being made by Christ the indispensable, but at the same time effectual, prerequisite to faith in His name, it affords

striking testimony to the supremacy of God in the whole matter of the sinner's salvation. In the light of such teaching of the Saviour, we cannot wonder to find the Apostle saying, "All things," or rather, all these things, the things relating to redemption, "are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. v. 18).

The same truth seems to be brought into view and set in a very solemn light in another word of Christ supplied by Matthew: "Every plant which My heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up" (Matt. xv. 13). It is true that the direct reference of these words is rather to doctrine than to persons. But the words which immediately follow, "Let them alone, they be blind leaders of the blind" (verse 14), show how close is the connection in the view of Christ of the person with the doctrine which he has imbibed. We may accordingly regard His saying here as having its application to both, and therefore as teaching that the growth, whether of doctrine or of life, which has not God at its root is foredoomed.

But the altogether most striking recognition by Christ of the Divine sovereignty in the application of redemption is that contained in the words, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth"—the former term, "O Father," expressive of filial confidence, the latter, "Lord of heaven and earth," descriptive of absolute and unquestioned supremacy, and accordingly appropriately used in this connection—"because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes" (Matt. xi. 25), that being the manner in which in the experience of the Saviour this supremacy had been exercised in connection with His declaration of the truths of the kingdom. "The wise and the prudent," the educated and scholarly of

the nation as a class had missed them ; "the babes," the men and women with little or no pretension to intellectual power or culture (for the antithesis here is not the ethical one, however that may be implied in the terms used), had found them. They had been hidden of God from the one, disclosed of God to the other. The result was one which could scarcely have been other than painful to the Saviour. We may believe this, without forgetting for a moment that His supreme interest was in the man, and that distinctions on which the world counts much were nothing to Him. Still the rejection of His teachings and of His person by the more intellectual and scholarly of the people to whom He came, the men of high repute for wisdom and learning, the acceptance of His doctrine and of Himself almost exclusively by those who had no learning or culture of which to be proud, whose sole distinction it was to be undistinguished, must have been among the trials of His earthly life. To doubt this is to doubt that He was entirely human as we are, nay, more, it is almost to cast suspicion on the sincerity of the terms in which He bewailed the rejection of His ministry and of Himself by Jerusalem, the intellectual capital of the nation. Not to recognise, and to recognise distinctly, that the Saviour is here in the presence of a trial, and a severe one, to His human feelings is to miss the whole significance of His words of thanksgiving, for words of thanksgiving they are and not of meek submission. He finds in it, or rather in the fulfilment of the Divine will in the circumstances which constitute the trial, the ground of adoring joy ; He makes the "I thank Thee" rise out of its bosom. And, what makes the whole procedure so instructive for us, the ground of His thanksgiving in view of the hiding of the things of the kingdom from the wise

and prudent and of their disclosure to babes is not, as we might conceive it to have been, any perception in advance by Christ that in this way the interests of His kingdom were to be best advanced, but it is simply and wholly the fact that the will of God is thereby fulfilled : " Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight " (Matt. xi. 26). In the form of the statement, the hiding from the wise and prudent is as much the object of the Saviour's thanksgiving as the disclosure to the babes. In reality, however, the thanksgiving must be regarded as proceeding mainly if not entirely on the latter, the discovery of Divine truth to some simple and ignorant souls ; the former, the concealment of the same truth from others of higher intellectual attainment, being introduced in subordination to the main object of the thanksgiving and perhaps by way of making its significance more emphatic. So Wendt, who cites as parallel cases Isaiah xii. 1, Romans vi. 17.

### III.—IN THE BESTOWMENT OF THE REWARDS CONNECTED WITH REDEMPTION.

This aspect of the Divine sovereignty is forcibly taught in the parable of the labourers in the vineyard (Matt. xx. 1-16), and especially in the words put into the mouth of the householder, " Friend, I do thee no wrong : didst not thou agree with me for a penny ? Take that thine is, and go thy way : I will give unto this last even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own ? Is thine eye evil, because I am good ? " (verses 13-15). The key to the parable, which raises many questions on which it is not necessary to enter here, is supplied by the closing verses of the preceding chapter, from which it should not have been separated, and very specially by the question of Peter, " What shall we have

therefore?" Thus viewed, it would seem to be directed against the mercenary spirit displayed in that question, the feeling that by a certain amount of sacrifice or service men come to have claims on God for a proportionate recompense. The parable as a whole, and especially the significant words quoted, teach that the rewards of the kingdom are of grace, not of debt, that they are bestowed not arbitrarily indeed, but in a sovereign manner, and as God deems fittest, and in particular that they are not measured by length of service, like the wages of a hireling. It can scarcely be designed to teach that every true servant shall receive precisely the same reward from God, however that may appear to be implied in the fact that each labourer, according to the narrative, receives a penny; for that would bring it at once into contrariety with other teachings of Christ on the subject (Matt. xxv. 14-23). In one sense, indeed, even this is the case. It is so, if the reward be viewed, as by many it has been, as eternal life, for of this all faithful servants shall be made partakers. But then this boon, like all blessings of a spiritual kind, is more or less according to the spiritual character of the man who receives it. The main truth of the parable, at least, stands out with sufficient clearness amid difficulties, some of which are due to the attempt to make all the details instructive, *vis.*, that God deals in an absolutely free and sovereign way in dispensing the rewards of His Kingdom; while no one is dealt with unjustly, no one on the other hand has a strict claim, one of merit, on these rewards.

Here belongs also the statement of Christ: "To sit on My right hand and on My left," that is, to occupy places of honour in the kingdom, "is not Mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father" (Matt. xx. 23; Mark x. 40). The statement is one which

has created serious difficulty to the expositors, and has indeed been variously rendered by the translators. Some take "but" (*ἀλλὰ*) here as equivalent to "except" (*εἰ μὴ*), and so read: "it is not Mine to give except to those for whom it is prepared of My Father". It was so rendered by Chrysostom, Kuineol, and others. Meyer sets it aside as untenable on grammatical grounds; but it is difficult to admit his objection to be conclusive in the face of such passages as Mark ix. 8, Matthew xix. 11, in both of which the same term occurs in the sense of except. The difficulty of taking it in any other sense is an extremely grave one, as the statement would appear then to make the Saviour repudiate the right to assign to each of His followers his distinctive place in the kingdom of glory. The rendering of the Revised Version is: "but it is for them for whom it is prepared of My Father". Whichever reading we adopt, the sovereignty of God in the bestowment of rewards and honours in His kingdom speaks unmistakably out in it. It is impossible not to recognise in the words "prepared of My Father" a Divine destination to place and power of an absolute but not therefore arbitrary character.

The sovereignty of God is thus recognised by Christ in relation to every stage of the work of human redemption. Its initiative is purely of God. It takes effect according to Christ's teaching only where God operates in a gracious way, and it is He who in a sovereign way bestows its awards. This sovereignty, if it has its aspect of mystery and difficulty for our minds, giving rise to perplexities which the keenest intellects have failed to dispel and which have weighed heavily on the hearts of many, has also, even as standing alone, its aspect of comfort and encouragement.

It presents to us the agency of God as at work in the accomplishment of the salvation of men, and so gives us the assurance of its success, notwithstanding the difficulties often felt to be overwhelmingly great, by which it is attended, for "The things which are impossible with men, are possible with God" (Luke xviii. 27). "With God all things are possible" (Matt. xix. 26). This is after all the side of the Divine sovereignty which is most frequently presented to us in Scripture. We must be careful, while not either denying it, or keeping silence regarding it, how we present it, careful especially that we do not place it as a barrier between the sinner, needing and seeking salvation, and Christ, the one Saviour—a use of it which Christ Himself never makes, though by a mistaken interpretation of John x. 26 He has been supposed to do so.

But it does not stand alone in the teaching of Christ any more than it does in Scripture as a whole. It has its complement on the Divine side in the love which is proffered to man without distinction, and on the human side, in the responsibility of man for his treatment of that proffer. The Saviour bears testimony to both these truths.

First, He bears testimony to the mercy or love of God, as exercised towards fallen men simply as such. The love of which He Himself is represented as the gift is love to the world (John iii. 16), that is, to sinners of mankind without distinction of race or character. It is a love which has its ground and motive in His own nature, in Him who is love, and which therefore flows freely to sinful men at large. The Saviour, who is not only the expression of that love, but who is in His own person, moreover, the Revealer of the Father, proffers grace, rest, life, salvation to all, who in accepting Him will accept these at His

hands. If He specialises any, it is "the lost," "not the righteous but sinners". It is almost superfluous to quote texts in support of this. But take these: "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink" (John vii. 37); "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him and He would have given thee living water" (John iv. 10). Thus this "living water," which has in it the virtue to impart eternal life (verses 13, 14), is spoken of as given to men for the asking: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. xi. 28). Fulness and freeness in the offer of salvation can go no farther than this. We are not permitted to doubt its sincerity. Inability, if such exists, to perceive its logical consistency with those other statements which set forth the sovereign agency of God in the matter of man's salvation, must not be allowed to involve it in doubt. But indeed it is the man who has the most profound sense of the sovereignty of God in the matter, who should be found proclaiming the freeness of the Gospel with the greatest confidence, and it is the sinner believing it who should be the last to procrastinate.

Second, He bears frequent testimony to the responsibility of man for his treatment of the Divine offer. The Saviour teaches this either directly or by implication in passages far too numerous to quote. It is directly implied in His charge against the unbelieving Jews: "Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life" (John v. 40). It is true this "will not" is at the same time a "can not". "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only" (John v. 44). But it is a "cannot" just because faith in Christ is so essentially



a moral act, one made possible or impossible by the prevailing disposition, the whole inward character of the man, and therefore responsibility for this disposition and character, such as every healthy conscience feels, carries with it responsibility for the believing acceptance of Jesus Christ and of life in and through Him. This responsibility would seem to be distinctly involved in the sentence of condemnation pronounced by the Saviour on the unbelieving rejection of Him. This is never spoken of by Him as a misfortune simply, a regrettable loss, it is a sin, one might almost say the one damning sin under the gospel: "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John iii. 18, 19). This, however, is not so much the teaching of individual texts, as it is of the gospels as a whole. It is presupposed in every invitation, every appeal, every warning. If there is any seeming inconsistency between the sovereignty of grace in teaching and drawing men, and the responsibility of the individual for the exercise of faith in Christ, the Great Teacher does not recognise it; does not at least for one moment set Himself to explain it. He witnesses with equal clearness and authority to both; and one need not hesitate to affirm that no view of life and duty is safe and healthful which leaves either out of account.

To sum up what has been learned on this subject; a broad and comprehensive view of Christ's teachings leads us to regard God as at once free and sovereign, and sovereign because free, in the matter of human salvation. In the exercise of sovereign mercy He gives His only-begotten

Son; in the exercise of sovereign grace and power, He leads men to Him as their Saviour, He gives them to Him to be saved; and in the exercise of the same sovereignty He assigned to each his place of honour and authority under Him and in His kingdom. But all this takes place under the operation of a dispensation of grace, of which "the world," mankind, sinners without distinction, are the object; and in a manner which, so far from cancelling human responsibility, does but accentuate it.

## CHAPTER XI.

### SIN.

IT is a question of very great moment what view Jesus took of human nature; in what light did He regard the moral and spiritual condition of the human race as a whole? Is man in His view everywhere depraved, everywhere guilty and needing redemption? Or did He regard in this light, not men as a whole, but only certain individuals, or classes? The answer to these questions must obviously affect, and affect powerfully, our whole conception of the work of Christ. The doctrine of sin virtually determines the doctrine of redemption, both in its nature and scope, of regeneration and indeed the whole circle of Christian doctrine.

It is unnecessary to say that very divergent views have been entertained on this subject. Baur imputes to Christ, if not an optimistic view of human nature, yet one essentially different from that which the Church has with almost consent ascribed to Him. On the basis of certain words employed by Him in the parable of the sower, He is regarded as teaching that man possesses the capacity in the exercise of his own unaided power to come into the Kingdom of God. John Stuart Mill in his *Essays on Religion* says: "According to the creed of most denominations of Christians (though assuredly not of Christ), man is by nature wicked". In view of this diversity of opinion, it becomes a matter of no small interest and importance what Christ's teaching really is respecting human nature in its moral

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aspect, that is, as everywhere sinful or as not. Is sin a characteristic of few only, or at most of many, or is it of all? It is a question of less importance, though one of by no means small importance, What were the forms of it which He specially singled out for condemnation?

Regarding the general question, there seems to be ample ground in the gospels for the assertion that Christ does not view sin either as a superficial evil or one limited to a portion of the human family. It is not only that in His statement to Nicodemus (John iii. 3, 5), affirming the absolute necessity of regeneration to entrance into His Kingdom, both its universal prevalence and its deep-seated character seem to be implied. The destructive criticism of the age is quite equal to discrediting the historical character of this interview as reported in the fourth gospel only. But the testimony of the synoptical gospels to the presence in man everywhere of a sinful element is not less explicit while it is even more direct. Jesus, we are told, began His ministry with an indiscriminate summons to repentance (Matt. iii. 2 ; iv. 17 ; Mark i. 15). The indiscriminate character of the summons, it is true, might rest on the generally, and not necessarily universally, sinful condition of those whom He addressed ; but what are we to make of the prayer which He put into the mouths of the disciples? In this prayer the petition, "Forgive us our debts" (Matt. vi. 12), "our sins" (Luke xi. 4), takes its place alongside of the other, "Give us day by day our daily bread" (Luke xi. 3) ; the implication being, that the need of forgiveness by man is as wide, as universal, as the need of physical nourishment. He applies the terms "lost" (Luke xix. 10), "dead" (Luke ix. 60), to men not, as far as the narrative shows, exceptionally wicked. The use of the strong figure in the latter passage is obviously

suggested by the circumstances under which it was spoken, but its application by Him at all to men leading the ordinary moral life of the day is surely most instructive as to His estimate of human nature. Still more conclusive, however; He characterises the disciples, evidently viewed as representing mankind generally, as evil (πόνηροι): "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children" (Luke xi. 13). It adds greatly to the significance of the characterisation that the term is the very one which in the singular and definite form designates the evil one. With these testimonies before us, it seems impossible to come to any other conclusion than this, that in Christ's eye human nature was everywhere infected with the virus of sin.

At the same time, it has to be frankly admitted that the Saviour recognises wide ethical distinctions as existing among those to whom He came. If some "loved darkness" (John iii. 19), were "of the devil" (John viii. 44), and did his works, others are "of the truth" (John xviii. 37), "of God" (John viii. 47), and therefore hear His voice. If there are "publicans and sinners," "harlots," men and women leading unrighteous and impure lives, there are also Simeons and Annas "waiting for the consolation of Israel" and "looking for redemption in Jerusalem". If there is a Matthew to be called from the receipt of custom, there is already a Nathanael "in whom is no guile" (John i. 47). There would appear to be some ground for the contention "that Christ's way of speaking about human depravity was in important respects unlike that of scholastic theology" (Bruce's *Kingdom of God*, p. 134). The difference, however, seems to be presented with some degree of exaggeration, when it is said that "Christ saw in the sinful something more than death, depravity and bondage, some spark of

vitality, some latent affinity for good, an imprisoned spirit longing to be free, a true self victimised by Satanic agency, that would fain escape from the thrall," while, according to the theology of the schools, "the natural man is held to be dead as a stone is dead". The theology is surely very rare, if it ever indeed obtained, which does not recognise in man some latent element of good, however much overlaid with evil. The Saviour does certainly recognise it. His recognition of it is seen in the terms under which the sinner's return to God is pictured in the parable. Coming to Himself, in His whole way of dealing with open and grievous sinners, publicans and harlots; in the hope which He cherishes that His appeals to them by word and act will not be ineffectual. It should be added that even the term "lost" on Christ's lips is "an expression of compassion rather than of judicial severity". Only the loved and the prized are spoken of as lost. The very term intimates that if in extreme danger, and in the meantime far from God, they are missed, they are not forgotten; their return, their recovery, is desired, if not also hoped for. But while all this is true and important, the fact still remains that according to Christ's teaching men are everywhere sinful and in need of redemption.

It is true Christ speaks of righteous persons (Mark ii. 17; Luke v. 32), even of "just" or righteous "persons who need no repentance" (Luke xv. 7). In the former instance, it seems natural to conclude that He is speaking, as we continually do, comparatively. In comparison with others who had lent themselves to all manner of evil, some were righteous. In the latter case, the persons seemed to be characterised from the legal point of view. Like Paul, they were, or at least thought themselves, "touching the

righteousness which is in the law, blameless". The eldest son in the parable may be taken as a striking representative of this class. But it is easy to see how far such a condition is from one of moral or spiritual wholeness. Those occupying it, and contented to do so, Christ would have spoken of as the last to have no need of any inward change. Were some such not among those of whom He said, "Verily, I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you" (Matt. xxi. 31)?

In considering in detail the teachings of Christ respecting sin, attention may be called to what is said respecting:—

#### I.—ITS NATURE.

It is true we have nowhere what can be called a formal definition of sin by Christ. More than one of His sayings, however, seem to point to selfishness, or self-seeking, the substitution of self for God as the supreme object of the life, as its essential principle. First, there is the use of the term evil (*πονηροι*) in Luke xi. 13. The context shows what signification Christ attaches to the word, here applied to the disciples as representing men in general. In the connection in which it is used, and from the antithesis which it is evidently designed to suggest between the character of God as giving good things, the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him, and that of man, it can only mean selfish, disposed to give personal considerations and interests the first place. The same idea is suggested by the words, "Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me" (Luke xv. 12). In so far as the parable may be regarded as at this point representing the relation of man to God, it seems to present the desire for independence of Him and of His oversight and

control, as the moving principle of the evil and wretched downward course. This is also the most prominent feature in "the husbandmen" in the parable of the vineyard (Luke xx. 9-16), as these are delineated by Christ. The culminating act of sin in their case is that which finds expression in the words, "This is the heir; come let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours". The Saviour's estimate of it is seen in the words in which He announces the penalty by which it should be overtaken: "He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen" (Matt. xxi. 41).

The same conclusion respecting Christ's view of the essence of sin is reached when we take account of His view of love, love to God and to one's neighbour, as the fulfilment of the law (Matt. xxii. 37-40; Mark xii. 30, 33; Luke x. 27, 28). In thus emphasising love as the sum of the Divine requirement, practically identifying all true human goodness therewith, the Saviour virtually makes the principle of sin to be the absence of love, or, what is the practical equivalent of this, its inevitable attendant, selfishness or self-seeking; that is, the kind and degree of self-regard which is cherished when the heart closes itself to God as the supreme object of affection and to man His child. Accordingly we are led to think that the essence of sin, according to Christ's view, is not so much the predominance of the animal and sensuous parts of the nature over the rational and the spiritual, as the replacement of God by self as the supreme object of regard. Sin is thus not so much the absence of love to God, as the self-regarding spirit, the enthronement of self in the life which necessarily follows the dethronement of God.



## II.—THE SPHERE OR REALM OF SIN.

There is a whole class of sayings in which Christ may be regarded as pointing out the sphere within which we are to look for what He terms sin. Some of these are of a negative, more of a positive character.

1. Negative. The sphere of sin is not, properly speaking, the body, or it is the body only as the organ of the spirit, and as expressing its dispositions and principles. Nor is sin contracted by things external to the man, however these may become to him occasions of sin. When they do, the ground of the defilement is not in the things themselves, but in the wrong inward disposition which they excite into action. "Do ye not perceive," said Christ, "that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him" (Mark vii. 18; Matt. xv. 17). The process of defilement, according to the view here stated, is from within outward, not from without inward. Again, "To eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man" (Matt. xv. 20). The full significance of the principle here asserted, and its far-reaching influence, can only be understood by those who know something of the vast importance attached to outward ceremonies in Christ's days, and the heavy and unprofitable burden which their supposed obligatory character imposed on the consciences of men. To the men of that age this word of Christ, or the principle which it involved, was nothing less than a charter of emancipation. But, indeed, the lesson is for all time, as holiness is not a matter of ceremonial observance, so sin is not mainly, if at all, a matter of ceremonial neglect.

2. Positively. (a) The sphere of sin is primarily, or

properly, the heart: "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man" (Matt. xv. 19; Mark vii. 21, 22). By the heart we are to understand, in consistency with Scriptural usage, not the affectional part of the nature simply, but the seat of intelligence and volition as well, the whole inner or spiritual being. It was an element of signal importance in the ethical teaching of Christ that He definitely located sin there, that He attached the stamp of evil, not to the external act simply or mainly, but even more to the inward disposition or feeling, which is sometimes only restrained by lack of opportunity or fear of consequences from passing into outward deed. In this way the law, which had been externalised and robbed of its proper significance, received new breadth and depth.

We see the principle already applied in the Sermon on the Mount: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; . . . But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment" (Matt. v. 21, 22). Again: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. v. 27, 28). The importance of this side of the Saviour's teaching can only be realised by those who are aware of the extent to which Pharisaism had made morality a matter of external conduct, or of rite and ceremony, replacing in numerous instances the Divine moral requirement by some Rabbinical tradition, or by some so-called religious observance, as when the obligation of children to support an aged parent was cancelled by the

dedication of the same amount of his means to some pious purpose, and thus bringing about a disastrous separation between religion and morality.

(b) As closely connected with the foregoing, or at least in full accord therewith, Christ, in pointing out the sphere or realm at once of sin and of holiness, lays great stress on men's feelings towards their fellowmen and their treatment of them. The case just adduced is an example of this. But it runs throughout His whole teaching. The sins which He in particular condemns are not those of irreligion, but those of inhumanity, and especially when that was practised under the guise of religion; devouring widows' houses and for a pretence making long prayers (Mark xii. 40; Matt. xxiii. 14); binding heavy burdens and grievous to be borne and laying them on men's shoulders (Matt. xxiii. 4); censorious condemnation of others (Luke xviii. 11). Most instructive of all is His grounding of the final condemnation and rejection of the lost on their selfish neglect of the offices of humanity and kindness: "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat. . . . Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me" (Matt. xxv. 42-45). It could not have been the intention of Christ to teach that it is more important to love men than to love God. His meaning undoubtedly is, that there is no true love of God where man, His creature and image, is not loved and cared for, any more than there is or can be true love to God where Jesus Christ, His Son, is rejected. To those chargeable with either the one or the other He will say, "But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you" (John v. 42). The lesson is for all time, and one most important and most necessary. Selfishness is irreligion. The love of God and the love

of man must grow together, or they cannot grow at all.

(c) Under this head attention may be called to the special importance which the Saviour attaches to human speech : " But I say unto you, that every idle word which men shall speak, they shall give account thereof on the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned " (Matt. xii. 36, 37). The term " idle " (*ἀργον, ἀεργον*), literally profitless, is by some regarded as here equal to evil (*πονηρον*). The striking declaration is explained, at least in part, by the fact that the word equally with the act, sometimes even more than the act, both reveals the real character of the man—" Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh " (Matt. xii. 35)—and tends to develop and to fix that character.

### III.—THE FORMS WHICH SIN ASSUMES AND UNDER WHICH CHRIST CONDEMNS IT.

It is scarcely possible to give an exhaustive enumeration under this head, yet no statement of the ethical teaching of Christ would be at all adequate which did not aim at something like fulness here. The following may be named as among the forms of sin singled out for warning and condemnation :—

1. Oppression ; wrong inflicted on the weak by the strong, an obvious outcome of the selfish principle which has been seen to constitute the very essence of sin. This is singled out for emphatic condemnation in Matthew xxiii. 14, Mark xii. 40, as above quoted. Again, in the parable of the unthankful servant the master is made to say to one who had cast his fellow-servant into prison : " O thou wicked

servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him" (Matt. xviii. 32-34). This injustice of man against his fellow is condemned by Christ, not only when it takes the form of acts of oppression, but also when it takes that simply of harsh and uncharitable judgments: "If ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless" (Matt. xii. 7). It is true that the teaching of Christ on this subject simply follows in the line of that of the Old Testament prophets, repeated on many a page of their writings, but apparently largely forgotten, even by the professedly pious of that day. But while the condemnation of the oppression of the weak by the strong is not original with Christ, nevertheless, in the prominence given to it among the forms of evil which met His eye, in the terrible severity of the terms in which it is denounced, the thoughtful reader will ever find a most instructive feature in the ethical teaching of our Lord.

2. Covetousness. "He said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness" (Luke xii. 15). This sin is closely connected with the foregoing; it is an evident outgrowth from the same selfish principle. The term employed properly means the desire of having, and, as is implied, of having for oneself; the desire of gain for itself and without any regard to unselfish ends to be sought through its means. There is something striking in the Saviour's condemnation of this desire, all the more as it does not at least on the face of it involve the use of wrongful means to secure its gratification. Not the less does He condemn it, as betraying a

mistaken and dangerous view of the worth of earthly goods ; one that could work the ruin of the spiritual nature only the more securely that it did not wear the offensive form of violence or lust.

3. Unfaithfulness. Christ everywhere takes a serious ethical view of life. Each individual is here, with his talents, physical strength, intellectual powers, means, influence, committed to him by God, and for the proper use of which he is held to strict account. The misuse of them, or rather the simple neglect to use them, is condemned in terms of great severity in the parable of the talents (Matt. xxv. 14-30 ; Luke xix. 12-27). "Wicked and slothful servant" are the words applied by Him to one who is represented as simply hiding his Lord's money instead of trading with it. Closely connected with this, if indeed distinguishable from it at all, is the idea which is ever forthcoming in His teachings of life and its opportunities, as a trust presenting every day in large things and in small, nay, specially in the small (Luke xvi. 10), occasions to show the spirit of fidelity or the reverse by which it is actuated. If this conception of life is not original to Christ, at least in the emphasis which it receives, it is very distinctive of His teaching. There would seem to be little doubt that the prevailing view which He took of His own life, as the accomplishment of a specific work assigned to Him by the Father, had much to do with the prominence which the duty of faithfulness, on the one hand, and the sin of unfaithfulness on the other, receives at His hand.

4. The profanation of what is sacred, as in the case of the temple. It is written : " He found in the temple those that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money sitting : And when He had made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the

oxen ; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables " (John ii. 14-16 ; Matt. xxi. 12-13 ; Mark xi. 15-17 ; Luke xix. 45, 46). The conversion of God's house, His Father's house, its courts even, into a house of merchandise, or rather into a scene of thievish trading, moved His meek spirit, notwithstanding the arguments from convenience by which the traffic might have been excused, to something like violence for once, and yet perhaps not to actual violence. The view which regards the scourge here as an emblem, the sign of authority, has much to say for itself. Its actual use as a weapon may well have been unnecessary, as, indeed, so far as the human delinquents were concerned, it would have almost appeared to us as unseemly. The designation which He applies to the temple—My Father's house—is significant and appropriate in the connection. Because it could be so termed it was meet that the Son should cleanse it of the unseemly traffickers. Its profanation by them, by turning it to purposes of gain, and of unjust gain besides, was one of the things which excited Christ's indignation ; and while He does not in so many words term it sin, He displays a feeling towards it which only sin, and sin of an altogether odious character, could awaken in His pure breast. The indignation of Christ on this occasion is all the more worthy of notice that usually it is not on places and days that the stamp of sacredness is set with Him, but on human beings, on their character and interests.

5. Hypocrisy. The violation of truth in the sphere of the religious life, either when taken by itself or in association with pride, uncharitableness, inhumanity and other such sins, was exactly that which evoked the most frequent and the most severe condemnation at Christ's hands. The praying at the corners of the streets to be seen of men

(Matt. vi. 5), the offensive claim to superior goodness (Luke xviii. 11), the ostentatious alms-giving (Matt. vi. 2), the trust in the external and the ceremonial accompanied by the neglect of the inward and the moral (Matt. xxiii. 23), the pretension, above all, to an elevation and purity of character which was far from being possessed (Matt. xxiii. 27); it was such violations of truth as these, which more than aught else moved the indignation and drew down the rebuke of Christ: "Woe unto you, hypocrites!" is the ever-recurring word on His lips; and by the hypocrisy which the Saviour condemned we are not always and necessarily to understand conscious insincerity, a profession of goodness consciously and deliberately assumed and for selfish ends. Such, no doubt, it sometimes was. But the word has a wider meaning. The profession of religion, the claim to be acting from religious motives, when the life is at bottom worldly or selfish, perhaps even cruel or inhuman, is hypocrisy, whether the individual making the claim, making it in act if not in word, is conscious of the insincerity or not. The denunciation of this in every form is almost the most distinctive feature in the ethical teaching of Christ; it is only less distinctive than the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount. The Pharisee not openly or grossly immoral, in the main perhaps outwardly proper, is by Him more frequently and more severely condemned than the sceptical and irreligious Sadducee, the unrighteous publican, even than the drunkard or the adulterer.

What is the explanation of this so striking fact? It could not be that these grosser forms of sin did not come under His eye, and still less that He regarded them with indifference or anything approaching thereto. It may



well have been, because in their very grossness their true character came to light, because their wickedness was admitted on all hands, too generally so, to need His express condemnation. But this explanation, while true as far as it goes, is not adequate. The ostentatious externalism, the empty and sometimes insolent pretence to goodness, must have been peculiarly abhorrent in His eye, otherwise it had never received such frequent and such severe condemnation at His hands; His righteous displeasure could not have concentrated itself on it in the way it did. The following words deserve consideration as throwing light on the case: "True holiness consists in love. Negative holiness, which carefully keeps aloof from the unholy, is a counterfeit. Selfishness is the root of sin, and it reaches the lowest degree of turpitude when it is associated with religion. To be religious without love, is to be at the farthest possible distance from God and true righteousness. Therefore the shepherds of Israel, who pride themselves on their virtue and sanctity, are more truly lost than the sheep they neglect by reason of that very neglect."

6. Unbelief. The Saviour sometimes speaks as if the unbelieving rejection of Himself were the crowning sin under the Gospel, the one which above all others, the sin against the Holy Ghost excepted, entailed condemnation. Thus it is said, He (the Holy Spirit) will convince the world "Of sin, because they believe not on Me" (John xvi. 9); "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin"; "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did they had not had sin" (John xv. 22, 24). The intensely moral character of faith in Christ is the presupposition of these words; its intimate

connection with the deepest qualities of the man. The attitude which the man takes in relation to the Saviour discloses what he at bottom is. Unbelief condemns, and is singled out for special condemnation by Christ, not only because it is the rejection of the divinely appointed means of salvation, but because it is the rejection of absolute goodness, and such goodness accrediting itself before the eyes of men by works proper to its own heavenly character. To be in the presence of such goodness, and to be unmoved by it, or moved only to hatred, to turn away from it to courses of selfish or sensual indulgence, must this not be in the very nature of the case, the damning sin? "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John iii. 19).

7. The sin against the Holy Ghost. This sin has been dealt with in the chapter on the Holy Spirit.

#### IV.—THE ROOTS FROM WHICH SIN, OR RATHER SINS SPRING.

1. The absence of any true love of God. "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you" (John v. 42). In the absence of this love, both the highest motive to right conduct and even the most effective instrument for ascertaining it are wanting; duty is not loved, in many cases not even known. Sin is the natural outcome of the heart that loves not. It can take many forms. The rejection of Him whom God has sent is the form of it of which the Saviour was speaking in the context when He disclosed in the words quoted the principle from which it flows.

2. Spiritual blindness. "If a man walk in the night he stumbleth, because there is no light in him" (John xi. 10).

The expression is peculiar, "no light *in* him". The light is within the man, which serves for spiritual guidance. All allowance in sinful courses puts out this light, or causes it to burn with growing dimness. It is, to say the same thing in another way, that such allowance closes or impairs the vision of the eye, through which the light which streams from God can enter in. The danger of this state is only aggravated by a show of light which is sometimes possessed or claimed by the subject of this spiritual darkness. Jesus said to the Pharisees, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin ; but now ye say, We see ; therefore your sin remaineth" (John ix. 41).

3. The tempter. One has, to be faithful in one's exhibition of the Saviour's teaching, to add to these purely subjective sources of evil an invisible spiritual agent, whose very life it is to seduce men to disobedience and sin. To Peter, Jesus said on the occasion on which that Apostle would have turned Him away from the path of the cross : "Get thee behind Me, Satan" (Matt. xvi. 23). In the suggestion, which has even the guise of loving solicitude, the Saviour recognises the working of the adversary whom He had encountered in the beginning of His ministry, and whom He was again to encounter and overcome before He could say, "It is finished". This subject, however, will be more fully treated under a distinct head.

We omit here all reference to the penalty of sin, which will be more appropriately treated under the head of retribution and reward.

#### V.—THE SAVIOUR'S MODE OF DEALING WITH SIN.

1. On its severer side. It pained Him ; no wonder, when we remember that He saw it without any of the disguises

by which it so often conceals its true character from us. He rebuked it—He tore the veil remorselessly away under which it sought to hide itself. He threatened it with penalty. He uttered terrible woes over those guilty of it in some at least of the forms which we have been considering. The very gentleness of the Saviour's heart added force and point to these denunciations and threatenings.

2. On its more gracious side. (a) There is His correction of the prevalent sentiment, that exceptional forms of suffering were visitations of the Divine displeasure on account of exceptional wickedness. "Suppose ye that these Galilæans" (whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices) "were sinners above all the Galilæans. . . . Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke xiii. 2-5). Here belongs also the answer which the Saviour made to the inquiry of the disciples regarding the man born blind: "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (John ix. 3). It is hardly necessary to say that the Saviour does not deny the existence of sin either in the man himself or his parents; what He refuses to recognise is any causal connection between either the individual or the parental sin and the blindness of which he was the subject. He repels the insinuation involved in the question of the disciples that it was an instance of retributive suffering.

(b) The tender consideration of the Saviour in dealing with sin comes out in the next place, in His whole manner of treating those whose lives were confessedly sinful, and who were therefore objects of aversion or of scorn to

the respectable classes. He ate and drank with publicans and sinners. He declared it to be very specially His aim to save these lost ones, to call them to repentance. He did not decline, to the surprise and bewilderment of His entertainer, He welcomed the attentions of the woman who was a sinner in the house of Simon. To another brought into His presence charged with a gross act of sin, He said, "Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more" (John viii. 11). He had challenged those of her accusers who were without sin to subject her to penalty, with the result that He was left alone with the accused. His words, it is to be noted, are not words of forgiveness, but simply those of One who gives no sentence. They speak indeed His condemnation of the act, leading Augustine to say : "*Ergo et Dominus damnavit, sed peccatum non hominem*".

(c) The crowning example of the Saviour's gentleness in dealing with sin and with sinners is supplied by His prayer for the forgiveness of those who put Him to death, and the plea of ignorance by which He enforced it : "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do".

In conclusion, the Saviour's teaching as a whole in regard to sin, the forms of it singled out for special condemnation and the severity with which these were condemned ; His almost total silence as to other forms of sin, of an apparently more offensive character, and His tender dealing with those admittedly guilty thereof, are very striking and significant. One need not hesitate to say that no one should count himself in a position to do justice to Christian thought on the matter of sin who has not very carefully studied both what the Saviour said and what He did in this connection.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE EVIL ONE.

SOME preliminary remarks are requisite in approaching the consideration of the Saviour's teachings on this subject. It must be evident that it is one on which we can have no knowledge distinct from that supplied by revelation. The matter is one which lies entirely beyond the sphere of sensible observation. At most on grounds of analogy, human thought might affirm the probability or the improbability of the existence of such an agent, just as it may in a similar way affirm the probability or the improbability of the habitableness of other planets, or of the existence of other orders of intelligent beings, but beyond this it cannot go, it cannot reach certainty. Our own observation or consciousness enables us to affirm as a fact the existence of evil, that is, of activities, inward and outward, contrary to the standard which conscience affirms to be the true one. But what the causes are of these activities, whether purely natural only as inherited tendencies or external circumstances, or whether there is embraced also the action of a personal and invisible evil power, man cannot certainly tell. "Analogy from the observation of the only ultimate cause which he can discover in the visible world, *viz.*, the free action of a personal will, may lead him, and generally has led him, to conjecture in the affirmative, but still the inquiry remains unanswered by authority" (Smith). In inquiring into this matter, it is not difficult to recognise two extremes

into which the human mind has fallen ; one, that which considers evil to be simply a kind of negative imperfection, arising from the influence of matter, or some other disturbing cause ; the other, the Persian or Manichæan hypothesis, which traces the existence of evil to a rival Creator, inferior indeed to the Creator of the good, and destined to be overcome by Him. Revelation holds an intermediate position between these two, affirming, on the one hand, the complete supremacy of God, and, on the other, " the influence of an Evil Spirit, exercising that mysterious power of free will which God's rational creatures possess to rebel against Him, and to draw others into the same rebellion ". This truth was only gradually revealed. The Book of Job stands almost alone in the Old Testament in the distinct mention of " Satan," the adversary and the tempter, and it is important to notice that the power he wields, according to this book, is a strictly circumscribed and delegated power. In the New Testament the existence of such a being is not so much directly taught as everywhere taken for granted. With this preliminary statement, we are now in a better position to understand the teachings of Christ on the question.

1. The existence and personality of the Evil One. The former (the existence) is of course implied in every reference to his agency by the Saviour. It is not a case in which the successive statements can be regarded as instances of mere accommodation by the Lord of His language to the ordinary Jewish belief. The subject is not one on which error could be tolerated as unimportant. It is impossible to conceive of the Saviour being either mistaken in His view or misleading men in His teaching on such a subject, and yet maintain His infallibility on the one hand, or His moral

perfection on the other. We must therefore receive, on the authority of Christ, the existence of Satan as a certain truth ; and in addition His personality. All the statements made respecting him are consistent with this attribute ; some of them demand it, as when it is said to Peter, " Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat " (Luke xxii. 31). " The enemy that sowed them is the devil " (Matt. xiii. 39). These, desire, sowing, are surely personal feelings and acts.

2. The nature of the Evil One. The teaching of Christ as well as the whole circumstances of the case would lead us to think of this nature as spiritual or angelic. The Saviour in His statement respecting the judgment of the lost, speaks of " fire prepared for the devil and his angels," giving ground for the view that Satan is possessed of angelic nature ; a rational and spiritual creature, superhuman in power, wisdom and energy. We must believe that he was created pure and holy, and that, in some way unaccountable to us, he fell from his integrity. But on this Christ does not speak. There are two passages, indeed, in which He seems to do so. One is, " he was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the truth " (John viii. 44). The word is *ἔσθηκεν*, which means properly " stands," being always present in signification—I have placed myself, that is, I stand (see Matt. xii. 47 ; xx. 6 ; John iii. 29), whereas the pluperfect, *ἔισθηκεν*, means " stood ". It is right to say that the Revised Version retains the *past* signification, putting the *present* in the margin. With the removal of the *past*, " abode," from the passage, any testimony which it may have been supposed to bear to the fall of Satan from a state of original integrity disappears. In consistency with this view, the words " from the beginning " must



refer to the beginning of his action upon man: with an allusion, perhaps, to the temptation of Cain to be the first murderer. The other passage is, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke x. 18), where the allusion might be to the original fall, but the use of the imperfect, "I was beholding" (*εθεώρουν*), and the force of the context make the reference figuratively to the triumph of the disciples over the evil spirits the more natural one. But while there is nothing in the Saviour's words to satisfy our curiosity as to the metaphysical nature of Satan, they acquaint us fully with its moral characteristics. The names applied by our Lord to designate him are full of significance. There is (a) the name "Satan" (Matt. iv. 10; Luke x. 18; xxii. 31). The word is Hebrew (*שָׂטָן*), and is simply an adversary. By this name he would seem to be pointed out as "the adversary" of God and of man. His creature, (b) "the devil" (*διαβολος*), is another name (Matt. xviii. 39; John viii. 44). The proper meaning is accuser or slanderer, that is, the accuser of God to man, and the accuser of man to God. In the first capacity he acts in tempting man to evil, representing God as arbitrary, and stirring up in man the spirit of freedom. It is more difficult for us to understand the second part; it is closely connected with the great difficulty, the permission of evil; (c) "the wicked one" (*ὁ πονηρος*): "Then cometh the wicked one" (Matt. xiii. 19); and so, "Deliver us from the evil one" (Matt. vi. 13, R.V.). The element of selfish and malignant character would seem to be expressed by this word; an element which comes out still more distinctly in the words "murderer" or "manslayer" (*ἀνθρωποκτονος*) applied to him (John viii. 44), and "liar" (*ψεύστης*), which is applied to him in the same verse.

3. His power and action in the world. There are several statements which bespeak his power ; for example, the name applied to him in more than one passage, "the prince of this world" (John xii. 31 ; xiv. 30 ; xvi. 11). It is true the designation cannot be understood as implying the admission of any unlimited power—any essentially independent power. The whole teaching of Scripture is against this.

As to his action, we see it in the parable of "the sower" represented as a negative influence, taking away the action of the word of God for good ; in that of the "wheat and tares" as a positive influence for evil, introducing wickedness into the world. We see it again and in the most striking manner in his temptation of the Saviour at the beginning of His public ministry. This has sometimes been regarded by rationalising divines as a mere subjective conflict ; the conflict of two opposing or contending motives in the breast of the Saviour. On the contrary, the objective reality of the temptation is to be held fast ; not necessarily the appearance of the devil in personal outward form. He who knew no sin was tempted, and He was tempted of the devil. Again the Saviour recognised his working in Peter, when he remonstrated against His submission to death, saying : "Be it far from Thee, Lord," and said : "Get thee behind Me, Satan" (Matt. xvi. 23) ; as He recognised it in the Jews when He said : "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (John viii. 44). His own superiority to his influence is loftily asserted in the words spoken at the close of His career : "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me" (John xiv. 30).

4. His subjection predicted and in part accomplished : "I beheld," I was beholding when the disciples were casting out evil spirits, "Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke

x. 18); "The prince of this world is judged" (John xvi. 11); "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John xii. 31). The Saviour's personal victory over the Evil One in the pledge of ultimate victory over him for His Church and people.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE HOLY SPIRIT.

THERE are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We have passed in review the teachings of Jesus Christ respecting the first, God the Father, and respecting the Lord Himself, His person, His mission, His death. We are now to consider His teachings respecting the third, the Holy Spirit. We place at the head :—

#### I.—HIS PERSONALITY.

The term employed to designate Him, Spirit (*πνευμα*), very readily suggests the idea of an influence, an invisible and impersonal force and nothing more. There have been and there are those who have stopped with this idea. Most, if not all, who deny the proper Deity of Jesus Christ deny also the personality of the Holy Spirit. This is just what we might expect. The conclusion in both cases is reached rather on philosophical than on Scriptural grounds. It is far more the difficulties which the Divinity of the Son and the personality of the Spirit present to our reason, than the weakness of the Scriptural proof that determines their rejection. The personality of the Spirit, however, is definitely taught by our Lord, not so much indeed directly and in separate passages, as it is presupposed in His entire teaching regarding Him. Almost all, if not indeed all, the expressions which He employs to designate His work, are such as to our thoughts involve the possession of intelligence

and will, that is, personality. It is, for example, said of Him, "He shall teach you all things" (John xiv. 26); "He shall testify of Me" (John xv. 26); "He shall guide you into all the truth: for He shall not speak from Himself; but what things soever He shall hear, these shall He speak: and He shall declare unto you the things that are to come" (John xvi. 13, R.V.) Surely the various functions set forth in these words could only be conceived of by the disciples, can only be conceived of by us, as those of a personal agent.

Still more decisive is the statement, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter (*ἄλλον παράκλητον*), that He may abide with you for ever" (John xiv. 16). It will be noticed that the term is *ἄλλον*, another of the same; not *ἕτερον*, another and different. Now, as He, the first Paraclete, was unmistakably personal, the expression employed, "another Comforter," almost compels us to think of the subsequent Paraclete as likewise personal.

The evidence furnished by John xiv. 26, when closely examined, is similarly conclusive. The words are: "But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you" (R.V.). Although the term "the Holy Spirit" is in the Greek neuter, and the subsequent relative (*ὃς*) is in the same gender, the masculine personal pronoun takes the place of the neuter when the Saviour speaks of His work: "He (*ἐκεῖνος*) shall teach you". The same pronoun is employed in John xv. 26: "He (*ἐκεῖνος*) shall bear witness of Me". It ought to be added, that the evidence, in the case of the latter statement, is much strengthened by the words which follow: "Ye also shall bear witness". The natural suggestion is, that as the one witness to Christ is personal, so also must be the other,

of which it is the echo. On Christ's showing, then, taken in its plain and natural sense, the Holy Spirit is not a mere influence, is not an impersonal spiritual force, unconscious of its own effects. He is a personal agent. Many, it is to be feared, who give a formal assent to this truth oft forget it in fact, to their own spiritual loss, not less than to the dishonour of the Third Person of the Trinity.

## II.—HIS MISSION IN ITS RELATION TO THE FATHER AND TO THE SON.

The terms employed in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of John warrant us to speak of the mission of the Spirit. He is sent even as the Son was sent ; and this sending is set in certain definite, if not perhaps very easily comprehended, relations to the other persons of the Godhead.

I. Its relation to the Father. In this connection such words as these occur : "He shall give you another Comforter" (John xiv. 16); "The Holy Ghost whom the Father will send" (xiv. 26). The reference in both of these passages is obviously to the action of God the Father in the economy of grace. Here the initiative in the mission of the Spirit is ascribed to Him, as, in John iii. 16, the initiative in the sending of the Son. This is not lost sight of even in another passage, in which the agency of Christ comes into the foreground : "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you *from* the Father" (John xv. 26). The relation thus far is economical and temporal only, however it may be supposed to rest on relations of an immanent and eternal character. There is more difficulty in determining the force of another expression which is employed in the sequel of the passage, "the Spirit of Truth which *proceedeth* from the

Father". Two views, it is well known, have been taken of it; one, according to which the terms "which proceedeth from the Father" are exactly parallel, if not entirely equivalent, to those in the beginning of the verse, "whom I will send unto you from the Father". On this view, the procession mentioned is simply economical or functional—designates an official act, a transaction in time, and not a relationship of nature. Another, according to which the terms designate an immanent and therefore eternal distinction within the Godhead; what has been called the eternal procession of the Spirit from the Father, corresponding to what, in the language of theology, is called the eternal generation of the Son. The latter view, which was the predominant one in the ancient Church, and among moderns has been adopted by Stier and Godet, has in its favour the use of the present tense, "proceedeth," as distinguished from the future, "I will send," in the previous clause, and also the fact that otherwise taken the two clauses are, in appearance at least, tautological. On the other hand, it has against it that the preposition is *παρά* not *ἐν*, "from the side of" not "out of," and that the aim of the Saviour in the passage is entirely practical, seems to be rather to state the historical mission of the Spirit, than to announce the interior relations of the persons of the Godhead. Accordingly, the former view has a large preponderance of opinion in its favour, numbering, among others, Luthardt, Meyer, Westcott and Bernard. On this view, the present tense, "proceedeth," still comes to its full right when it is regarded, in contrast with the future, "I will send," of the previous clause, as bringing out the truth that this sending consequent on the Saviour's exaltation is but a special stage "in a going forth that is continuous and of

old" (Bernard). Taking this view, one may still hold with Godet, that "the divine facts of revelation are based upon the Trinitarian or immanent 'relations,' and are, so to speak, their reflections".

2. Its relation to the Son. Here we meet such expressions as the following: "I will *pray* the Father and He shall give you another Comforter" (John xiv. 16); "The Holy Spirit whom the Father will send *in My name*" (John xiv. 26, R.V.); "When the Comforter is come, *whom I will send* unto you from the Father" (John xv. 26). Thus another side of the mission of the Spirit is brought into view. If He is given by the Father, He is given as the result of the intercession of the Son. If the Father sends Him, He sends Him in Christ's name, that is, as His representative, to carry forward His work; nay, if it is from the Father that He comes, Christ Himself in His state of exaltation can be spoken of as the sender, "whom I will send unto you". Thus the mission of the Paraclete attaches itself in the closest and most intimate way to the person and work of the Lord. The incarnation of the Son, with its issues of earthly suffering and heavenly glory, supplies the basis of the descent of the Holy Ghost, in that larger and more special sense in which mankind was to experience His presence and working.

Another aspect of this relationship is presented to us in the words: "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send Him unto you" (John xvi. 7, R.V.). Thus the Saviour's departure is necessary to the Spirit's advent. How are we to construe this necessity? Two considerations at least seem to have intelligible application here. First, the visible presence of the Saviour must be



withdrawn before the invisible presence of the Comforter can be realised. His continued presence in the flesh, so great a help to them in the opening of their spiritual life, would be a hindrance to its further development, would keep them in the region of the visible and the external, accordingly Christ must go in the flesh before He can come in the Spirit. To have Him go thus was a seeming loss, in reality the loss was gain. The withdrawal of the limited bodily presence prepared the way, and was a necessary preparation of the way, for the recognition of a universal presence. Second, the full accomplishment of His work in His death and consequent resurrection and exaltation was requisite to the bestowal of the Spirit. His own glorification was the ground, as far as we know, the indispensable ground, of the sending of the Spirit. So much seems to be taught by the statement: "The Holy Ghost was not yet given: because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John vii. 39). The Spirit for His people is a part, and an important part, of the reward of His sufferings. The ground of the expediency therefore is not only that He must go away, withdraw His bodily presence, but that He must go to the Father, be glorified with Him.

### III.—HIS DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER AS EXHIBITED IN THE GOSPELS.

This is already forthcoming in the designations applied to Him. There is first the designation, "the Holy Spirit" or "the Holy Ghost". Now holiness of an absolute kind belongs, it is unnecessary to say, to each person of the Godhead. The epithet "holy" might be affixed to the name of the Father, or of the Son, equally as to that of

the Spirit. But it is not so employed in the gospels. It is not even once applied to the Son, and only once to the Father (John xvii. 11). It is the constantly recurring epithet in connection with the Spirit, being found oftener than twenty times in the four gospels, and being common to them all. How are we to account for this? What is its significance as characterising the third person of the Trinity? Its effect, if not its intention, is to emphasise the peculiar sacredness which attaches to the operations of the Spirit in the hearts of men, even to give a certain character of inviolability to these. Or perhaps the expression has its root in an underlying antithesis. There are other spiritual beings of differing ranks. As over against them, He is the Holy Spirit, separate, transcendent, divine—belonging to another sphere altogether, the Spirit of God.

There is, second, the designation "the Spirit of truth" (John xiv. 17; xv. 26). "Truth" or "the truth" in this expression is not so much a characteristic of the Spirit as it is a specification of the instrument which He wields, or of the object with which His work is concerned. In other words, the Saviour in making use of it does not so much present the Spirit as true, or truthful, One whose witness may be implicitly received, as He exhibits Him as One whose great function it is to interpret and develop and apply Divine truth; to make it enter the soul, and attest its entire reality therein. If Christ is "the Truth," in virtue not only of what He spoke, and of what He did, but as Himself forming its very centre, the Holy Spirit is "the Spirit of truth," as lodging that truth in vital, operative force in the hearts of men.

Lastly, there is the designation "the Comforter" or "the Paraclete" (John xiv. 17, 26; xv. 26; xvi. 7). The proper,

or, at least, the primary, meaning of the term would seem to be, One called to the side of another to maintain his cause, to give him counsel, assistance, support. This, rather than the active signification, comforter, consoler under trial, appears to be the force of the word here, as in 1 John ii. 1. By its use the Saviour presents the Spirit to the disciples as the One who on the withdrawal of His corporeal presence was to plead and defend their cause as against the world, to be their counsellor and friend in all emergencies which might arise. In any case, if the word is retained in the passage, we must read it in its old English sense, and not in that which it carries for the most part now. It will, then, as Bernard, who pleads for its retention in the passage above quoted, remarks : "speak of strength, support, encouragement given to the life of thought and action, still more than of consolation in trial and in sorrow".

#### IV.—HIS WORK.

The primary reference of the Spirit's work may be said to be to the Saviour. He comes to vindicate His claims, to put the seal of Divine acceptance on His work, to carry forward and complete His triumph; in the Saviour's own words, "to testify of" Him, to "glorify" Him. But in doing this, He touches both the world and the Church. Accordingly His work is capable of being contemplated in a twofold aspect, and is so presented in the Saviour's teaching.

1. In relation to the world. (a) As a work of conviction. "And He, when He is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye behold Me no more;

of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged" (John xvi. 8-11, R.V.). The passage is one of first moment for a right apprehension of the Spirit's work in relation to unbelievers, all the more that it stands almost alone in dealing with this aspect of truth, but it is at the same time difficult. The word which is employed to designate the Spirit's action on the world is ἐλέγξει, translated in the Authorised Version "reprove," in the Revised Version "convict". The former word, at least in its present, though not its earlier signification, is obviously inadequate. The latter comes nearer to the term employed in the original, though it would appear as if our language had no precise equivalent. It combines the idea of convincing testimony and confutation. It contains even a primitive element. The process results in the first place in condemnation, though that is not necessarily, as has been wrongly apprehended, its final issue. Lücke says: "The testimony of the Holy Ghost in behalf of Christ as opposed to the unbelieving world is essentially a refutation, a demonstration of its wrong and error". The result may be either the world's conversion or its obduracy. It may, doubtless sometimes does, harden; but its aim, as, in many instances, its issue, is to take the world out of its wrong and ruinous attitude to the Saviour, and avert from it the judgment on sin which it discloses. There is at least no ground in the language employed for the view taken by some that the conviction of the world by the Holy Spirit referred to here is simply for the purpose of its condemnation, while it stands opposed to the view, taught throughout the gospels, of the deliverance of the world, not, indeed, in its entirety through Christ.

The work of conviction is in the matter of (περὶ) sin,

righteousness, judgment, taken in the first place in the most general way. These are evidently the three dominating conceptions in the moral sphere, those in which the highest interests of mankind are implicated. Man's past and present and future are severally forthcoming in them. The successive stages in this work of conviction are then detailed, and its nature and grounds brought to light. "Of sin, because they (not the world collectively, but men personally) believe not on Me". Two views are possible here; one, that which makes the sin, of which the Spirit convicts the world, specifically that of rejecting Christ, and not the sinful condition in general. This is the view of Meyer, who would render the words thus, "Of sin, *so far as they* namely do not believe on Me"; the other, which makes the conviction wrought that of the evil and guilt of sin in general, as shown in the unbelieving rejection of the Son of God. The latter seems entitled to the preference. It is the teaching of the Saviour throughout, that faith and unbelief severally stand related in the closest and most direct way with the moral condition of the man, sum it up as it were. Unbelief is at once a sort of final or culminating sin, and a proof of a sinful state; so the Saviour had uniformly taught. And the Spirit, attaching His convicting work to the Saviour's words, should bring this home to the hearts of men. He should make use of the rejection of the Son of God, to convince of the fact and the enormity of sin. Pentecost, with its cry from pricked hearts, "Men and brethren, What shall we do?" is the best commentary on this part of the statement.

The second part of the Spirit's work in relation to the world follows: "Of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye behold Me no more". The first question here is,

Whose righteousness is meant? Alford, following Augustine, Luther and others, claims that the righteousness here, like the sin, is that of the world. But when he comes to explain this statement, it amounts to this, that it is not the world's own righteousness, but that of the accepted man Christ Jesus, standing at the right hand of God and manifested in the hearts of men by the Spirit to be their only righteousness. It is at least simpler, and also more satisfactory, to regard the righteousness designated as the personal righteousness of the Saviour Himself, and the force of the whole statement to be, that the Spirit should not only teach the world what righteousness really is, but should constrain the recognition of it in its absolute and perfect type in His person, who condemned of men, had been exalted by God, had gone to the Father, and should do this through the very fact of His thus going. The departure, not out of life simply, but the departure to the Father, to receive His approval, to share His glory, was to be the great argument which, in the hands of the Spirit, was to convict or convince the world of righteousness; the righteousness of the Saviour. The exaltation of the Saviour was the Divine vindication of His claims, the proclamation of Him as "Jesus Christ the righteous," and the descent of the Spirit was in turn the evidence of that exaltation (Acts ii. 33). To the statement, He shall "convict the world . . . of righteousness, because I go to the Father," it is added, "And ye behold Me no more". The bearing of this clause on the main assertion has been a source of difficulty. By some who have given it consideration, it has been regarded as "an expression of His sympathetic love" for those from whom He was so soon to be parted (Luthardt); "an outflow of the thoughtful and feeling interest of Jesus in the approaching pain of separa-

tion which the disciples were to experience" (Meyer). But, as it appears to me, the pertinence of the statement in the connection is first perceived when we reflect how much the disappearance from the eye has to do with the true recognition of the higher qualities of the person. Recall the words of Christ, "When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am He" (John viii. 28), and it will be seen how the Spirit's work in convincing the world of righteousness in Christ was facilitated by the fact that men, friends and foes alike, were no more to behold Him.

The last part of the Spirit's work in relation to the world is thus expressed, "of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged," or (R.V.) "hath been judged". We are naturally led to regard the "judgment" here as that of Satan, as the "sin" was that of the world and the "righteousness" that of Christ. The force of the Saviour's assurance will then be, that the Holy Spirit shall demonstrate to the world the reality of judgment, shall refute its false opinion respecting it, in showing that the prince of this world has been judged. To its eyes he seemed to triumph in the Saviour's death, which had all the appearance of the victory of violence and hatred over meekness and love; in reality he was overcome, the prince of the world was shorn of his power in the very hour of his seeming triumph and by its very means. This, too, the Spirit, using the instrumentality of fact and doctrine, should demonstrate.

This instrumentality was to be employed. Facts were to be stated and interpreted. A meaning was to be assigned to them. Arguments, appeals, were to be addressed to the conscience and the heart, as we know was done by the Apostles, and is still done by the ministers of the Gospel. But nothing is said by the Saviour of the human agents:

"Their persons disappear in the glory of the Divine Being who works by their means".

(b) His work of regeneration. This likewise must be regarded as a part of the Spirit's work in relation to the world, inasmuch as, prior to the change, its subject must be regarded as belonging, not to the Church, but to the world. The great text here is, "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John iii. 5, 6). The detailed consideration of this passage may be deferred until we come to treat of the subject of regeneration. It is sufficient for the present to notice that, according to the teaching of the Saviour, the great and radical spiritual change by which fallen humanity is made capable of a place in the Kingdom of God is the Holy Spirit's work. There is a new life, and this new life is not a transmission from parents, is not a development of education and environment, it is an importation from above, and the agent in imparting it is the Holy Ghost. That which "is born of the Spirit," and that only, "is spirit"; "that which is born of the flesh," fallen human nature, "is flesh," and is incapable without Him of becoming aught else.

2. In relation to the Church or believers. (a) To carry forward and complete their knowledge of Divine truth. The following are the more important statements on this point: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John xiv. 26); "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father,



He shall testify of Me" (John xv. 26); "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall guide you into all the truth: for He shall not speak from Himself; but what things soever He shall hear, these shall He speak: and He shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall take of Mine, and shall declare it unto you" (John xvi. 13, 14, R.V.). The following points may be noted. First, the work specified is substantially that of further teaching those whom the Saviour had gathered around Him, of completing the revelation of Divine truth which He had begun. He had opened up to them a new region both of fact and doctrine. Much of it was by them yet untrodden, unexplored. They are encouraged, nevertheless, to advance by the assurance that the Holy Spirit should go before them and show them the way, for such is the force of the term employed. The new discoveries of truth are not to be flashed upon their minds by sudden revelation; they are to be made in connection with the exercise of their own intelligence: "He shall guide you"—"Guide you into all *the* truth," *i.e.*, all *the* truth relating to the matter in hand, respecting the Saviour and His work. The words seem to put a character of finality on the Apostolic teaching as to the substance of the Christian verities. Second, the Spirit's teaching is distinguished from that of Christ as being, shall it be said, more inward. It does not dispense with the instrumentality of outward fact and verbal statement. This instrumentality is in the present instance, if not indeed always, presupposed. It starts from this, but it starts only. It consists properly in clothing the outward fact with new significance, in setting the familiar statement in fuller light, and in attesting both fact and doctrine within the soul. And as closely connected

with this, it is still further distinguished, as consisting, not so much in the disclosure of what is new, as in the recalling to remembrance, and in the interpreting and vivifying of, that which Christ Himself had spoken (John xiv. 26). And yet this statement needs to be qualified, by allowing room for the prophetic or predictive agency in express words ascribed to Him: "He shall declare unto you the things that are to come" (John xvi. 13, R.V.), "that future which even now is prepared and in the very process of fulfilment". Third, its great subject is Christ, Christ's person and Christ's work, the nature and issues of His redemption: "He shall testify of (*i.e.*, concerning) Me"; "He shall take of Mine," properly "*out of Mine*," not all that belongs to Christ, or that may yet be known of Him hereafter, but so much as it concerns the Church in the meantime to know; "He shall declare unto you," and as the result of all this, "He shall glorify Me". Thus viewed, we may speak of the Spirit's work as pre-eminently unselfish. It may be compared to the light which itself unseen discloses all else. And yet this characterisation must not be suffered to suggest, even by implication, that the work of Jesus Christ, the Son, was unselfish in a less degree. If we were disposed for a moment to entertain the thought the immediately following words would prevent us: "All things whatsoever the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I, that He taketh of Mine, and shall declare it unto you" (John xvi. 15, R.V.). Whereupon Godet beautifully remarks: "We have here a mysterious exchange, as it were a rivalry of Divine humility. The Son labours only to glorify the Father, and the Spirit desires only to glorify the Son." It remains only to call attention to the fact that the words "He shall not speak of Himself" (A.V.) refer to the source of the Spirit's teaching,

not to the subject, and, like similar words spoken by the Saviour regarding Himself, seem designed to explain and accentuate the authority which belongs to the Spirit's teaching.

It is doubtless true that these words of Christ had an application to the Apostles, as the inspired teachers of the Church, which they have not had to any succeeding generation of believers. Nevertheless we are permitted to believe that this form of the Spirit's work did not close with the death of the last of the Apostles, or with the completion of the canon of Scripture. The Church is still under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and will continue to be till its Divine Head shall return. It is not forbidden to cherish the hope that through this teaching it may come to an ever fuller if not truer knowledge of the contents of revelation.

(b) To assist and support in a general way believers. This, as we have seen, is the proper implication of the term Paraclete, applied to the Spirit. In the absence of the bodily presence of the Saviour, He is to be the ever-present and effective helper of believers in all the trying emergencies of life. Accordingly we find the Saviour saying: "But when they deliver you up, be not anxious how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you" (Matt. x. 19, 20, R. V.; similarly Luke xii. 11, 12).

#### V.—HIS BESTOWMENT.

1. As assured of Christ. "Behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you" (Luke xxiv. 49). The words are spoken from the immediate neighbourhood of the Ascen-

sion. There is no mistaking their meaning. "The promise" is here the thing promised. Subsequent to the incarnation, the Holy Spirit is the Divine promise *par excellence*. The present, "I send," is not a case of that tense being used instead of the future. It is the appropriate tense in view of the fact that the whole work is done, and, in the deliverance to Him of all power in heaven and on earth, the condition attained, by which that sending is brought about. In Pentecostal measure the bestowment of the Spirit is close at hand, is only not realised.

2. As communicated in answer to prayer. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him" (Luke xi. 13). That asking is already a preparation for the receiving of the Spirit; indeed, must we not say, that He has been already given in some measure when, amid the divers forms of good which men desire, the heart singles out this one in its prayer to God.

3. As conditioned in its reception through faith. "He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believed on Him were to receive" (John vii. 38, 39, R.V.). The whole passage raises exegetical difficulties of a formidable kind. The words of the Evangelist (verse 39) have been even criticised as putting a wrong meaning on the Saviour's statement in verse 38. There is scarcely any mistaking, however, the general purport of the passage. The believer on Jesus Christ shall not only receive satisfaction for himself, for his own wants, in this Divine Lord. He shall himself, in virtue of what he receives, become a large source of

refreshment to others. He shall become this in virtue of the Holy Spirit bestowed on him. This bestowment is the direct result of his faith, a bestowment, however (and this is the commentary of John), which should only reach a measure commensurate with the words, "rivers of living water," used by Christ when, disappearing from the sphere of sense, He had entered into His glory.

4. As actually realised, but rather in its earnest, than in its full future measure. "He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John xx. 22). As the article is wanting, it may be rendered, an effusion of the Holy Ghost, such as, on the one hand, was appropriate to the risen but not yet glorified state of Christ, and, on the other, should at once prepare them for the fuller bestowment, and facilitate their recognition of it as His gift.

#### VI.—THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST.

The Saviour pronounces this sin as of peculiar aggravation, and even unpardonable. "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men : but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven . . . neither in this world, neither in the world to come" (Matt. xii. 31, 32 ; and to the same effect Mark iii. 28 ; Luke xii. 10). The statement raises two questions within the thoughtful mind ; What is the nature of the sin thus singled out for special reprobation and warning ? and, What is the ground of its being beyond the reach of pardon ? In answer to the first of these questions it seems safe to affirm that the sin differs from the simple rejection of the Saviour, or even His abusive treatment, as in Paul's case, as either of these may proceed from mere ignorance or inveterate prejudice ; blameworthy, indeed, but not necessarily

irretrievable. This sin, on the other hand, would appear to presuppose a certain observation, if not experience, of the operation of God's Spirit, and to consist in a defamation of the same, similar to that which was exemplified by the Pharisees when witnessing the gracious miracles wrought by Jesus Christ, they ascribed them not to the Holy Spirit with which He was filled, but to satanic influence. Accordingly, speaking generally, we seem warranted by the Saviour's words and the whole circumstances of the case in saying that it is the sin which is committed when men meet the manifest working of God's Spirit with opposition and contumely ; when they refuse to recognise and honour what they cannot help knowing to be a Divine principle at work before them, and instead direct against it opprobrious speech. The sin, it must be said, does not consist exactly in a wrong (a perverted and hardened) *state* ; it is an act, it is scornful and abusive speech—blasphemy directed against that which is most holy, deriving its dread significance, no doubt, from the perverted and hardened state, not hastily reached, of which it is the expression. Godet characterises it as “an insult offered to goodness as such and to its living principle in the heart of humanity, the Holy Spirit” ; Julius Müller as “hatred of the divine which has been recognised,” a hatred of which blasphemous speech is the natural and frequent expression.

This being taken as the nature of the sin, what explanation can be given of the fact that it, and, as it would appear, it alone, is unpardonable? According to the view which seems entitled to the greatest favour, the sin is beyond the pale of forgiveness, not because of its intrinsic heinousness, not because the expiation which avails for other forms of transgression cannot avail for this one, but because its

commission indicates a spiritual condition, reached often by slow degrees, in which all gracious susceptibility has been sinned away. He who with the Divine before his eyes, directs against it abusive speech, is past forgiveness, because he is past repentance. Meyer's words are : " The sin is not forgiven, because where it finds place, the receptivity for the moral action within the soul of the Holy Spirit has perished, and conscious, direct and decided opposition to the Divine agent has taken its place".

It needs only to be said further, which indeed has been already implied, that this sin presupposes the previous nearness of the Divine which it recognises only to reject and to vilify. The climax of evil, it is only reached where highest grace has been in operation. It was first possible through Christ and the operation of the Holy Spirit in and through Him. The Saviour's warning therefore speaks specially to those who have grown up amid spiritual surroundings.

The Saviour's teaching regarding the Holy Spirit is thus very full, as we might expect it to be. Taking it into account we are led to regard the Spirit as distinctly personal ; not an emanation or an influence, but a person. He is presented to us as the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, and as equally with the Son the Sent of the Father ; but at the same time as sent in the Son's name ; to replace His corporeal presence by a presence of a more inward and of a permanent kind, and to carry forward the work which the Son had begun—to rouse the conscience of the world, and to instruct and inspire the heart of the Church. He is clothed with these high and sacred prerogatives, but, just on that account, His presence and His working carry with them the possibility to men of the deepest and most ruinous form of sin.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### REGENERATION.

THE teachings of the Saviour on this subject are not numerous ; they are, however, extremely important, as the subject itself is. It is not too much to say that our whole conception of Christianity must be affected, and affected in a very radical way, by the view we are led to take of the spiritual change which the word denotes. Considering its extreme importance, it may not unnaturally be a matter of surprise that the passages directly affirming its necessity are so few and are confined to the Gospel of St. John. It is taught, however, as we shall see, if indirectly and more obscurely, in the other gospels. The idea of an inward and personal change in order to the production of the fruits of good living is present already, in the Sermon on the Mount, as well as in Matthew xii. 33, 35, and the idea of the impartation of a new life to man is very far from being confined to the fourth gospel. Still it must be admitted that the Saviour speaks in this gospel on the subject of regeneration with a directness not elsewhere found. The teachings of the Saviour respect—

#### I.—ITS NATURE.

The great passage here is, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again" (in R.V. "anew," with "from above" in the margin) "he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John iii. 3), and "Except a man be born



of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (verse 5). The expressions thus bearing on the nature of the spiritual change designated are, "born again," or "anew," or "from above". The Greek is *ἐὰν μὴ τις γεννηθῇ ἄνωθεν*. At first sight the rendering "from above" would seem to be entitled to the preference; for that is the most frequent meaning of the term (comp. John iii. 31; xix. 11), and is also that which its etymology suggests. It has been also urged in its favour that John habitually speaks of being "born of God," a form of expression to which the rendering "born from above" most nearly corresponds. In this sense it was taken by Origen and other of the Fathers, as it has been taken in more modern times by Erasmus, Bengel, Lightfoot, Meyer, De Wette and Lücke. The majority of the expositors, however, still give their preference to the rendering "again" or "anew" on such grounds as these, that if *ἄνωθεν* meant from above, it would in that case be the emphatic word, and might have been expected to precede the verb, that the object of the Saviour in this use of the expression seems to have been not so much to explain the source of the change, as to indicate its nature, and, lastly, that a second birth was obviously the sense which Nicodemus attached to it. Between "again" and "anew" there would seem to be little room for choice. The latter, however, is entitled to the preference. The idea is not that of mere repetition ("again"), it is rather that of an analogous process to natural birth ("anew"). The change, therefore, so far as this expression serves to designate it, is one which implies the impartation of a new life, the calling into exercise of new powers, the introduction to a new realm of thought and action. So much at least is implied in the figure of which the Saviour

makes use. And this view of the radical nature of the change designated, in opposition to all lower and more superficial views, such as have been taken of it, is confirmed by the terms applied to it in the fifth verse: "born of water and of the Spirit". According to the view taken of these words by some, including Calvin, the term water in this passage is used simply as the symbol of cleansing, and the whole statement is in effect, "Except a man is regenerated by the Holy Ghost, and through this regeneration is cleansed in soul, as the body is cleansed by water, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God". The somewhat analogous expression, "He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (Matt. iii. 11), is adduced in support of this view.

It must be admitted that this view of the Saviour's words is not wholly satisfactory. It has the appearance, at least, of violence to exclude from them all reference to baptism, that of John which was already in practice, and that instituted by Christ by which it was soon to be replaced. Admitting, as it seems we are bound to do, some reference to baptism, the question still remains what is that reference. Is it to the outward ordinance, the water-baptism, or is it to the inward change which it denotes, including repentance and forgiveness? If the former, the statement would in effect be, unless a man is baptised, and in baptism receives the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. Baptism is thus made equally necessary with the presence and operation of the Holy Ghost, or rather more necessary, for the latter is made dependent on the former, as its antecedent, and we have at once all the conditions of baptismal regeneration. This could scarcely have been the Saviour's meaning, all the less that the ordinance, in the Christian

sense of it, was not instituted when the words were spoken. Accordingly all the more sober, as well as learned expositors, while maintaining a reference in the passage to the rite of baptism, regard the primary reference to be to the baptism of John and to that baptism, not as effecting a fundamental change, but as itself presupposing and symbolising such a change; not as cleansing the soul from impurity, but as signifying the cleansing accomplished in the repentance which was the prerequisite. Thus viewed the whole statement may be regarded as designed to intimate to Nicodemus the necessity, in order to his entrance into the Kingdom of God, of his submission to the divinely sanctioned rite which was the symbol, and in a manner the seal, of repentance and so of forgiveness, and following on this of his reception of a new life, wrought directly by the Holy Spirit. Of course it is not to be expected that this view will commend itself to those who attach saving efficacy to the sacraments instituted by Christ. Accordingly Westcott, while accepting the above as the historical meaning of the words, adds what he terms their prophetic meaning, *viz.*, "that they look forward to a time when the baptism of water was no longer separated from but united with the baptism of the Spirit in the laver of regeneration, even as the outward and the inward are united generally in a religion which is sacramental and not only typical". It is safer to take the view of Godet as to the connection of the twain agencies designated, "that the pardon which is represented by water-baptism is only the negative condition, the *sine quâ non* of the new birth; the positive principle of this inner fact is the Spirit whom God gives to the soul which has been washed from sin".

Summing up the teaching of the two verses, as to the

nature of regeneration, or that spiritual change in virtue of which a man enters into the Kingdom of God, it is radical, it implies the impartation of a new life; it ushers the man into a new world, at its origin, not as the means by which it is accomplished, but as the symbol and seal of the penitence and forgiveness which form its negative condition, while its positive principle is found in the life-giving Spirit.

## II.—ITS NECESSITY.

This necessity is affirmed in the most explicit terms in the verses just considered: "Except a man be born again, he *cannot* see the Kingdom of God," "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he *cannot* enter into the Kingdom of God". The word in both cases is "cannot," not "shall not". The result is not due to an authoritative exercise of will, it is one determined by the very nature of the case. The character of the kingdom is such, its distinctive blessings are such, that unregenerate nature cannot enter it, is incapacitated for sharing them; incapacitated even for apprehending them. For this a fundamental change is required, not a growth, but a new beginning. The necessity for this is not only asserted in the passage, it is argued: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John iii. 6). To understand this statement, it is necessary to remember that "flesh" and "spirit" are not exactly related to one another as evil and good. The word "flesh" does not so much denote our human nature as sinful, ruled by evil and rebellious propensities, but as the seat of merely natural sensibilities, controlled by them, and if not without the power of appreciating what is Divine and spiritual, yet with that power latent, and only to be rendered other than latent by the

quickening breath of the Spirit of God. That which is born of the flesh—that which results from the pure creaturely nature, however cultivated and improved, remains essentially the same—cannot transcend the limits to which it belongs. The Kingdom of God is spiritual; and, therefore, in order to its participation, a spiritual nature is required. In other words, to the merely natural life which belongs to us as human beings, there must be added the new life of the Spirit. The statement is one of tremendous significance; one which we are constantly tempted to leave out of view or to reduce. Especially are we under strong temptation to do this in periods of low or decaying spiritual life.

This is not the only passage where the necessity of a radical spiritual change is taught by Christ. It is implied at least in the terms which He employs to describe His own work: "For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost" (Matt. xviii. 11). "That which was lost" (τὸ ἀπολωλός), humanity to which such a term can be applied must surely be in that condition in which, in order to be recovered, it must undergo a radical change. Still more to the point are the words, "Let the dead bury their dead" (Matt. viii. 22). It is generally admitted that the term "dead" is employed in the first part of the clause to denote a spiritual, as in the last, a physical state. In using this term, then, to characterise men, in speaking of them as dead, it is surely implied that a change which the man cannot achieve for himself must be wrought in him before he can take his place in God's kingdom of light and life. It is true that it does not appear from the use of these significant terms, "lost," "dead" in these passages, whether they apply in the Saviour's mind to men without exception; though the statement, "I am come that they might have life" (John x. 10), seems to pro-

ceed on the supposition that without Him, men, all men, are spiritually dead.

Not very different would seem to be the teaching of the parable of the marriage-feast (Matt. xxii. 1-13). The wedding garment, the want of which led to the extrusion of one of the invited guests, is most generally regarded as intended to symbolise righteousness, righteous character, the spiritual attire suited to the festive entertainment. It must obviously designate something which men bring not of their own, for how could those gathered indiscriminately from the highways and hedges have any such dress, but something which they receive ; thus, a righteousness which is not the fruit of their own endeavour, but which is wrought out for them and in them by God Himself. The figure is different, but the fundamental verity is the same in the discourse to Nicodemus, and in the parable of the marriage-feast, only it is more articulate in the one, more veiled in the other.

The necessity of the spiritual change, termed in John's gospel regeneration, is according to Christ's teaching in the passage, absolute, universal. It is not a necessity, having its application only in the case of heathen people, or of those who, whether heathen or Jewish, had led immoral lives. Nicodemus, to whom the words were addressed, was a Jew, in all likelihood a moral and well-living Jew. Then both the terms employed, and the ground adduced are of the very widest generality: "Except a man (*τις*) be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God," "That which is born of the flesh is flesh". Unless then it can be shown that this conclusion is either at variance with the general tenor of the Saviour's teaching respecting human nature, or comes into conflict with other definite statements made

by Him, it must be regarded as part of His doctrine that a radical spiritual change is in all cases requisite in order to membership in His kingdom.

### III.—THE AGENCY BY WHICH IT IS WROUGHT—THE HOLY GHOST, "BORN OF THE SPIRIT".

This point has already been incidentally discussed under the head of the nature of regeneration, and little more needs to be said on it, except to emphasise its significance as bearing on the nature of the spiritual change which a man must undergo on becoming a genuine child of the kingdom. By the terms which the Saviour employed in His discourse with Nicodemus, religious life is made a Divine attainment, a supernatural experience, and not a mere natural development, the result of heredity, of education, effort and favourable environment. There is a Divine act at its root, giving it being. How obviously John and Paul in their teachings lean here on Jesus. The temptation is strong in those days when development is supposed to be the key to unriddle all mystery, to forego this truth. Let us not yield to it for a moment. It may seem but a small stone in the vast temple of Christian truth, and its absence makes little difference, but it is the foundation of Christianity viewed on its experimental side, as the Divinity of Christ is of the system viewed on its doctrinal side. With its removal the whole falls or is so materially changed that it is a new and a different structure which stands in its place.

## CHAPTER XV.

### FAITH AND CONFESSION.

FAITH is a constantly recurring term in the teaching of Christ, so much so that it may be regarded as constituting, along with "Father," the most distinctive word in the system of truth which He announces. If it cannot be said to be exactly peculiar to the Christian system, if religion, from its very nature, and as dealing with that which transcends sense, presupposes under all its forms a certain kind and degree of faith, this quality attains at least a significance and a prominence in the Saviour's teaching which are nowhere else accorded to it. That teaching everywhere puts faith in the foreground, exalts faith, not indeed to the depreciation of obedience, but as a still deeper and more inclusive idea. We shall not attempt to define it; it will be better to seek to learn its meaning from the Saviour's manner of employing it. Though distinguished from obedience, it will be seen how far it is from being a purely intellectual quality, how intimately it is connected with the whole ethical character of him who attains it.

#### I.—ITS OBJECT AS DEFINED IN THE GOSPEL.

In examining the passages in which faith and its cognate terms are employed by Christ, one is surprised to find in how very many of them the object is understood rather than expressed. The statement, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain,

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Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove ; and nothing shall be impossible unto you " (Matt. xvii. 20), may be taken as an example of these. Some object, indeed, there must be in every case. The faith to which such possibilities were promised, could not have been a mere objectless trust, a simple, unreasoning persuasion arising somehow in the heart. Some object must ever be presupposed, to which it attaches itself. In some instances the object would seem to be God, the supreme, the controlling Power in the universe. It is so stated in express terms, "Jesus answering, saith unto them, Have faith in God" (Mark xi. 22). The faith, however, of which the Saviour in general speaks, and with the exercise of which both the healing of the body and the salvation of the soul are connected, has Himself for its object, not His words simply or His works, but Himself, His person, as inclusive of all else. "Whosoever believeth in Him" (John iii. 16). "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent" (John vi. 29). This is a point too obvious to require multiplied proof, but it is also one too striking and too important to be overlooked. Leading a truly human life, not distinguishable from other men, save by the miracles He wrought and the wisdom and goodness He exemplified, He nevertheless presented Himself as the object of a practically limitless trust, He challenged men's faith everywhere in Him in terms which, coming from any other lips, would startle us by their presumption or shock us by their blasphemy : "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me" (John xiv. 1). This at least is plain, in the light of His teaching. The proper object of faith under the Gospel is Jesus Christ, the personal Saviour, not as distinct from God the Father, but rather as embracing Him (John xii. 44),

the visible embodiment of His grace, the divinely appointed organ of His will. It is perhaps not allowable for us in this connection to distinguish between Christ and the truth He taught—for in a very real sense He *is* the truth ; but if the distinction may be made, then it is Christ Himself, and not His truth simply, that is in the last resort the object of the faith which is challenged under the Gospel.

## II.—ITS FUNCTIONS.

I. It is represented as the condition or instrument of bodily healing which was wrought or withheld according as it was brought into exercise. "If thou canst believe," He said to the father who had appealed to Him on behalf of his afflicted son, "all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark ix. 23); to another, "Thy faith hath made thee whole" (Matt. ix. 22 ; and so Matt. xv. 28 ; Luke vii. 50 ; viii. 48). A difficult point is raised when we attempt to explain the almost uniform requirement of faith by Christ in those who would be healed by Him, and to define the nature of the connection between the exercise, on the sufferer's part, of faith in Christ, and the experience by him of the Saviour's healing power. It is much easier to understand the reason for its requirement in the cases of spiritual healing, for in faith in such a Saviour, from its very nature, there is a regenerating and saving principle at work. Here there is no similar connection, none, at least, that is obvious. And yet, we may well feel assured that the general (for it was not absolutely universal) requirement of faith by Christ as a prerequisite to the exercise of His healing power was not arbitrary. It may well be regarded as pointing to a much closer connection between the ethical and the physical in human life than

we are accustomed to recognise. In one instance, at least, this connection is lifted by the procedure of Christ into distinct view. His first word to the man sick of the palsy who was brought into His presence was: "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee" (Matt. ix. 2); to be followed afterwards by the other: "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house" (verse 6). In addition to, and in strict agreement with this, His healing of disease must be regarded as strictly forming a part of the restorative or saving work of Christ, and taking effect, therefore, in accordance with that principle on the basis of which as a whole the work proceeds. The restoration of the spiritual nature by Christ, unless it were to be accomplished in some magical way, could only take place in connection with the exercise of faith in Him who wrought it, and so, in the deliverance of the physical nature from its disorders, it was ordinarily required.

The Saviour healed sickness, as He forgave sin, in response to faith. Where that faith was wanting, in the case at least of those who were capable of exercising it, the miracle of healing was not forthcoming, or was forthcoming only on the smallest scale. Indeed, more than one statement would seem to imply that it was in the power of human unbelief to lay an arrest on this form of the Saviour's activity. It is said: "He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief" (Matt. xiii. 58); and "He could there do no mighty work, save that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them" (Mark vi. 5). On the other hand, there seemed to be no limit to what could be accomplished where the requisite faith was forthcoming: "According to your faith be it unto you" (Matt. ix. 29); "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou

wilt" (Matt. xv. 28); "As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee" (Matt. viii. 13). It is thus seen to be at once the condition and the measure of help and blessing in the sphere of physical life.

It is to be noticed that the manifestations of it which filled the Saviour with greatest wonder, the like of which He did not find among the Jewish people, were exhibited by people of heathen race. He was a centurion in the Roman army of whom Christ said: "I have not found so great faith; no, not in Israel" (Matt. viii. 10). The whole teaching of the Saviour, however, goes to establish this point; the most important thing is that it should be there, not that it should be large, important though that is; the main thing is the healthful reality with which it is present in the life, not the dimensions which it has attained—though we find the disciples praying for its increase (Luke xvii. 5).

The question is naturally raised here, Does this prerogative still belong to faith? In other words, for it virtually comes to this, Is the age of miracles continued? Is Christ still ready to heal sickness, to cure blindness, to raise the dead (for why must we stop short of what we know to have been embraced in His actual working in the days of His earthly life?), waiting only the warrant of our faith to repeat the scenes of eighteen hundred years ago, hindered from doing so only by our unbelief? We find it difficult to believe it, though there are both statements in Scripture and occurrences in life which give a degree of plausibility at least to the view. On the whole, the conclusion seems more accordant both with reason and fact that the age of miracles has ceased, or at least that the Saviour no longer binds Himself to answer the faith of His truest followers

with restoration of lost powers, or even recovery from sickness.

2. It is everywhere represented as the condition or instrument of spiritual healing ; thus, of deliverance from judgment or condemnation : " He that believeth on Him is not condemned " (R.V., " judged ") (John iii. 18) ; of forgiveness of sins, " Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace," words addressed to one of whom He had just said, " Her sins which are many, are forgiven " (Luke vii. 47, 50) ; of everlasting life as inclusive of all else, " He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life " (John vi. 47 ; v. 24 ; iii. 15). Important questions arise whenever we pass beyond the statement of the simple fact, and inquire into the reason. We are safe in saying that no merit attaches to the sinner's exercise of faith on Christ, and that therefore the connection between forgiveness and faith, everlasting life and faith, cannot be of the nature of reward. It seems further obvious, that faith is the instrument simply of that deliverance from condemnation, that entrance into life which follows its exercise. The agent in this deliverance, the bestower of life, is the Saviour Himself. But it seems impossible not to recognise a certain fitness in the exercise of faith to that spiritual deliverance or restoration of which it is the instrument ; if, indeed, the word instrument is a proper one to use in this connection. It is not enough to say that the faith which apprehends Christ, the faith which embraces Him as Saviour and Lord, is the means of deliverance, the channel of life ; in the very act of faith the deliverance may be said to have begun, the life which it more and more receives to be already present. It is scarcely necessary to add that this form of the Saviour's activity is still exercised, His language in regard to it is quite different from that

respecting bodily healing. The latter is at best the fringe around the garment of Christ's truth, this its very substance.

3. It is represented in several memorable sayings of Christ as the condition of lofty achievement, as carrying with it the power of accomplishing what mere natural ability could not accomplish: "Jesus answering, saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith" (Mark xi. 22, 23; similarly Matt. xxi. 21, 22). These words seem to bring anything and everything within the reach of faith. But, first, absolute though the statement is, it is obvious that some limitation is to be understood. Faith cannot accomplish what is contrary to the will of God. Even if we do not maintain what some have maintained, that the Divine will is the only real power in the universe, at least we must hold that it is the supreme power. The truth would appear to be that faith can achieve great things, because in its truest and highest sense it implies a will in unison with that of God, and in virtue of this unison does not stop even at what may be called natural impossibilities. Hence the statement, "All things are possible to him that believeth". Second, the nature of the achievement mentioned, "the mountain removed out of its place," leads one to suppose that it was not so much physical operations which were in the Saviour's mind, as the insuperable obstacles to the progress of His kingdom, and that what He designed to teach was that no such obstacle should be insurmountable to a courageous faith in God (comp. Matt. xvii. 20; Luke xvii. 5, 6).

### III.—THE CONNECTION BETWEEN FAITH AND THE CHARACTER OF HIM WHO EXERCISES IT.

According to the teaching of the Saviour, this connection is of the most intimate kind ; and its nature is such that not only does faith determine character, but character in a measure at least determines faith, or the absence of faith. It is not a separate grace, which can be originated or cultivated by itself. There is no grace less separate. It is most truly regarded when it is viewed as the bloom and flower of all the graces, as involving in its very rise a certain degree of moral appreciation, the possession of certain moral qualities. This appears to be the teaching of the Saviour's word : " Every man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me " (John vi. 45). It is true the term faith is not found here, but the thing is. The " coming to Him " can in this case be nothing else than the believing on Him, must be a coming at the root of which is faith, or rather which is itself faith in active exercise ; and He tells us it is exemplified by those—it is not said indeed by those only, but that would seem to be the implication—who have " heard and learned of the Father " ; words which must here mean, not simply the enjoyment of the external teaching of the word, but a certain degree of inward appreciation thereof or of profit therefrom. It is the negative side of this truth, however, which comes into so large prominence in Christ's teaching, the side, namely, according to which unbelief, the rejection of Him, is the direct and inevitable result of a wrong moral state ; for example, " Ye have not His word abiding in you : for whom He hath sent, Him ye believe not " (John v. 38).

It is a consequence of the fact that God's word does not abide in them, has not its seat in them in any living and vital form, that they do not believe in Him whom God hath sent; then, had it abode in them they must have believed. Again, "Ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep" (John x. 26). Some have taken the latter clause as equivalent to "because ye are not of the number of the elect". This rendering, however, must be set aside, for, first, the terms "My sheep" do not naturally carry any reference to the chosen of God in the matter of man's salvation, however true it may be that those who constitute them are thus chosen; and second, there is no example in Scripture of the elective purposes of God, or rather the absence of such purpose being adduced, as would then be the case, as a reason for the unbelief of those not embraced in it. The force of the Saviour's statement would rather appear to be—that those to whom the words were spoken did not believe on Him because they were strange to the moral dispositions by which those destined to form His flock were distinguished. But perhaps the most conclusive testimony of the Saviour to the distinctly ethical character of faith in Him is that contained in the interrogation: "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" (John v. 44). The interrogation is equal to a strong assertion that a life in which the love of human praise is the ruling motive is incompatible with the exercise of faith in Christ. The two cannot coexist in the same heart. The reason of the incompatibility is seen whenever regard is had to the character of Him who is the object of faith under the Gospel, One of whose life self-denial is the principle, One of whom the enthronement of God in the life was at once duty



and blessedness. How should one leading a life in which the honour of men was the supreme end sought believe in such a Saviour? Faith in Christ, as the absence of faith, thus reveals the man, his real character, as well as helps in turn to shape that character.

#### IV.—THE SUPREME IMPORTANCE AND PARAMOUNT OBLIGATION OF FAITH IN CHRIST.

The great and instructive word of Christ here is: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent" (John vi. 29). In the question to which this is the reply, the Jews had said "Works of God"; Jesus says, "the work of God"—not one of many, but the one, that which takes precedence of all others, nay, which rightly done carries with it all others. To put it thus is not to strain Christ's statement, and thus viewed, all religious experience confirms it. Holding this unique place, we cannot be surprised to find the Saviour asserting its blessedness, and its blessedness especially when, as in our case, it has to be exercised without any sensible aid such as those enjoyed to whom He appeared after His resurrection. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John xx. 29).

#### V.—THE CONFESSION OF CHRIST, THE PRIVILEGE AND DUTY OF THOSE WHO BELIEVE ON HIM.

Faith in Jesus Christ as the only Saviour will naturally lead to the confession of His name, all the more because of the presence of so many who treat it with indifference or with scorn. This is due to Him whom the faith embraces, and it will be the impulse of the heart which has

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found in Him a Saviour. He demands it, not indeed directly and in so many words, but still obviously enough, both by the terms of encouragement and promise under which He speaks of it, and by those of threatening which He utters in regard to those who refuse it: "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven" (Matt. x. 32-33).

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN.

WE come at their stage to what may be termed the characteristic bestowment of the Gospel. As faith may be termed its distinguishing grace, so forgiveness may be regarded as its distinctive blessing, not by any means the only one which it secures, but the first rather in a long series of blessings. Its treatment follows very naturally the subject last considered, faith.

#### I.—ITS NATURE.

It will be seen that the Saviour nowhere defines forgiveness. He nowhere states what the exact change is which the man experiences when the Divine forgiveness is exercised towards him. The relation of correspondence, however, in which He sets it to our forgiveness of one another is full of instruction as to what is meant. "Forgive us our debts," so Christ taught His disciples to pray, "as we forgive our debtors" (Matt. vi. 12). But forgiveness with us, if it is complete or anything like complete, is not so much the remission of the penalty that was due—that indeed—as it is the putting the offence itself out of mind, and the dealing with the offender as if it had never been committed. If the light of love burns more dimly in a parent's face towards a child that has offended, that child is not fully forgiven. This also would seem to be according to Christ's teaching, as indeed according to the best human

thought, the essence of the Divine forgiveness. Its primary reference is to the sin, not to the penalty. It is the putting the sin away, so that it no longer intercepts love. If it is not the restoration of the sinner to the Divine favour, at least, that is its immediate result. The release from penalty, while not the main constituent of the Divine forgiveness any more than of the human, is involved in it. At first sight, it might appear as if this were not the case; as if the human analogy failed at this point. There are natural penalties of transgression from which even the Divine forgiveness does not set man free. The drunkard suffers in shattered nerves, even after God has pardoned his sinful indulgence. It is a fearful truth, that so far at least as we know, the natural consequences of an act are connected with it indissolubly. But these consequences cease to bear the character of penalties. They no longer speak of the Divine displeasure with the man. Forgiveness does not indeed arrest them, but "by producing softness and grateful penitence, it transforms them into blessings" (F. Robertson).

II.—THE POWER OF THE SAVIOUR TO EXERCISE FORGIVENESS; FORGIVENESS, THAT IS, NOT OF PERSONAL INJURY OR WRONG, BUT OF SIN IN THE STRICT SENSE OF THE WORD.

We meet the assertion of this power first in the healing of the paralytic (Matt. ix. 2-6), and especially in the words: "Jesus, seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee"; or, as it is in the Revised Version, "are forgiven". The noteworthy circumstance in connection with this instance is, that the power to forgive sins is exercised, not on one who came or was brought specially to seek it, but on one whose imme-

diate object would seem to have been bodily healing. In explanation of this fact, it has been suggested by more than one (Neander, Meyer) that the man's disease was either the natural consequence of sinful excess, or that, through its means, the sense of sinfulness had been strongly aroused within him. In any case, His first words to the paralytic, spoken doubtless as the result of His knowledge of his moral condition, were: "Thy sins are forgiven". The words are thus, not so much a communication of forgiveness as an authoritative proclamation of its possession by the man, but the whole course of the narrative compels us to regard it as a proclamation of the man's forgiveness by Him to whom it belonged to dispense it. When His right to do so is called in question, He expressly asserts it and confirms it by the immediate and miraculous healing of the man whose forgiveness He had announced. It seems beyond doubt that the man's sin and his sickness were very closely connected. Only on this supposition could the cure of the latter be a proof of His power to deal with the former in the way of forgiveness. The force of the interrogation which He addressed to those who found fault with Him should not be misunderstood. That is not, whether it is easier to forgive or to heal, but whether it is easier to claim the power to forgive or the power to heal. The interrogation is without doubt designed to meet the feeling beginning to be entertained by the critics of His conduct, *viz.*, that it was an easy thing to say, "Thy sins are forgiven"; any presumptuous person could say this, but from the nature of the case no one could tell with what result, if any. It was another thing to say, "Rise up and walk"; then it must at once be seen whether it was an idle word or not. Accordingly Jesus vindicates His right to say the former, that is, His power to forgive sin,

by saying the latter, and by so saying it as before their eyes, and at once, to restore to the man his lost physical powers. The terms employed by the Saviour are peculiar, "But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins" (Matt. ix. 6). It might perhaps have been expected that, as the forgiveness of sins has been ordinarily held to be a Divine prerogative, the statement would have run, "But that ye may know that the Son of God hath power"; but the term employed is the "Son of Man". It has been claimed on this ground that what is distinctive here is "the declaration of forgiveness of humanity," that the statement was made "by the High Priest of Humanity in the name of the race," that it was made "on the principle that human nature is the reflection of God's nature, that human love is the image of God's love, and that human forgiveness is the type of assurance of Divine forgiveness" (F. Robertson's *Sermons*, third series, pp. 87-89). It seems very doubtful whether the use of the term "the Son of Man" would support this contention. It was the chosen designation of the Saviour during His earthly life, denoting His entire personality. Its employment here, therefore, cannot be regarded as designed to emphasise His humanity in relation to the forgiveness of sins. When it is added "on earth," attention is simply called to the truth that this power, which had been hitherto regarded as exercised exclusively by God in heaven, was now exercised on earth by Him whom God had sent. It is here seen, moreover, that the power spoken of is not that simply of declaring forgiveness but of communicating it.

The same truth is attested by the Saviour's words spoken to the woman in the house of Simon: "Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins which are many, are forgiven; for she

loved much" (Luke vii. 47, 48). In form, indeed, it is rather the announcement of forgiveness than its bestowal, but that it was the latter as well as the former is evident, not only from the way in which it was understood by those who sat at meat with Him (verse 49), but from the whole scope of the passage and especially from the forty-third verse. To the words "for she loved much," two very distinct significations have been assigned. By the Roman Catholic Church they have been regarded as setting forth the ground of the woman's forgiveness. The same distinction is not made between faith and love by Roman Catholic as by the bulk of Protestant theologians. Love is regarded as entering into and inseparably connected with faith, and as equally with faith or rather more than faith, the foundation of forgiveness and justification. A view of the force of the Saviour's statement here not very different has been taken by some Protestant expositors, as De Wette and Olshausen. The same conception as to the connection between faith and love colours the whole teaching of Vinet. We have here to do not with the general question, on which it is not so clear that all the truth lies with what may be termed the Protestant view, but with the meaning simply of the clause before us. The words contained in it can either be taken as specifying the ground of the forgiveness mentioned in the previous clause, or as stating the evidence of that forgiveness. The narrative, regarded as a whole, appears to demand that the latter should be taken as the meaning for (a) It is the difference in measure of the debts remitted which is viewed as producing the different degrees of gratitude. (b) On the other view of the meaning, instead of saying, "To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little," it would have been necessary to say, "Who loves

little, to him little is forgiven". (c) The words, "Thy faith hath saved thee," show that it was faith, as contra-distinguished from love, which had been the instrument of procuring the woman's forgiveness; though perhaps less weight is to be attached to this consideration.

III.—THE CONDITIONS OR PREREQUISITES OF  
FORGIVENESS.

1. Objective ; the sufferings or the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The source of forgiveness, of course, is the love or grace of God. It has been widely held, that this grace can and does bestow forgiveness, irrespective of any condition or ground, except the fitness of the person to receive it. In favour of this view, it has been urged that there is no reference to any objective ground of forgiveness in the cases just considered, even as there is no reference to it in the parable in which, almost more impressively than in any other part of Scripture, the Divine exercise of forgiveness is set forth—that of the prodigal son. Accordingly some have drawn the conclusion, that according to the direct and immediate teaching of Christ, the forgiveness of sin does not proceed on any ground of expiation, such as is furnished by His sacrifice. The conclusion, it may be remarked, partakes of the uncertainty which necessarily attaches to any argument *e silentio*, increased in the last case by the parabolical character of the statement. The parable being in fact employed to set forth one aspect of truth, no conclusion can be drawn unfavourable to other truths from its silence with regard to them. In the case of this parable, for example, one might with equal validity infer that the first movements of the soul towards God are from the sinner himself.



There are at least two statements of Christ which seem to connect the exercise of forgiveness with His endurance of suffering. The first: "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all the nations" (Luke xxiv. 46-47, R.V.). The Authorised Version has, in addition, "thus it behoved". But even when this clause is left out, the preaching of repentance and remission of sins in His name is presented as consequent on His suffering of death and His resurrection from the dead. What are we to understand as the nature of this sequence. It cannot be that of time merely. It cannot be the purpose of Christ to present His suffering of death and His resurrection as the temporal antecedent simply of the preaching of repentance and forgiveness. Rather the former must be regarded as in some way, not further explained, conditioning the latter. The second statement is still more decisive. It is that contained in the words: "This is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi. 28), or, as in the Revised Version, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is shed for many unto remission of sins". If the words had been simply, "This is My blood of the covenant," or "of the new covenant," it might have been possible to regard the Saviour by their use, especially in the light of the transaction (Exod. xxiv. 8), as ascribing to His blood simply the power of ratifying the new covenant of grace, and having little or nothing to do with establishing it. But the addition, "shed for many unto the remission of sins," is inconsistent with this restrictive view. The latter clause must be regarded as epexegetical of the former, and thus regarded they must be viewed as making the exercise

of forgiveness proceed in some way on the basis of the sacrifice of Christ. What is obvious is that they set the "shedding of His blood" in direct relation to "the remission of sins"; in other words, it is regarded as taking effect, for forgiveness, not indirectly through changes which it works in the man, but directly or immediately. No fair exegete would deny this. Accordingly scholars like Wendt, who regard such a view of His death as foreign to the thought of Christ during His life, are led to adopt the conclusion that the words "for the remission of sins" are an addition made by the Evangelist to the words used by Christ on this occasion.

2. Subjective; (a) Repentance. "Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (Matt. iv. 17). The word is *μετανοείτε*, change your mind. John, too, had said Repent, but the word on Christ's lips seems to have a depth and an inwardness which it had not on John's. The change which the Baptist enforced by His burning words was more a matter of detail of conduct, of outward action; that which Jesus demanded was one of disposition, of inward principle. It was a radical change in the aim or end of life; one in virtue of which the kingdom and its righteousness would come to be matter of supreme regard, taking effect, no doubt, on the outward conduct, but relating primarily to inward thought and disposition. This change, then, from sin to righteousness, this turning the back on the wicked, or at least the worldly past, is presented with great prominence by Christ among the subjective conditions of entrance into His kingdom and enjoyment of its blessings, forgiveness among the others. It is inculcated in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican; a parable which shows us at once what it is, and how it is related to forgiveness, or justification as it is here termed. The parable serves more-

over to show that it is demanded not simply in the case of the grossly sinful, but even of the outwardly moral and religious. Thus it scarcely needed the words of the Saviour, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke xiii. 3, 5), to establish the universality of the condition. The teaching of the Saviour on this subject cannot be spoken of as new. The prophets with consenting voice had proclaimed the necessity of repentance in order to forgiveness, as His forerunner the Baptist had done. Only with His deeper conception of righteousness, and of sin, the change designated by repentance has a deeper meaning. (b) Faith. This condition is not so frequently presented in relation to the experience of forgiveness, in the words of the Saviour, as it is in the Acts and the epistles. It is, however, everywhere implied, specially in all those numerous passages in which it is presented as the means of life, in the high and blessed sense of that word; and it is explicitly recognised in the Saviour's words to the woman in the house of Simon, to whom after having said of her, "Her sins which are many are forgiven," He said also, "Thy faith hath saved thee". While faith in Christ is made the condition of forgiveness, as of life, there is no explanation given of the manner in which it operates, no approach to a theory of the connection between faith and pardon. The object of this faith which secures forgiveness is throughout the gospel Christ Himself; not what He did, nor even simply what He said, still less what He suffered, for His sufferings were yet future, but Himself, as in a way involving all these. As distinguished from the condition previously mentioned, this one may be said to denote the receptivity of the soul. Forgiveness comes as an act of grace on God's part, and faith receives it.

(c) The exercise of a forgiving spirit towards others.

This is the most characteristic feature in the Saviour's teaching regarding forgiveness, and it is one closely connected with His profound sense of the intimate relationships subsisting between the members of the human family. What is to be noted is, that forgiveness is not simply inculcated as a duty (Mark xi. 25), its exercise being demanded as against the sinning brother, not "until seven times, but until seventy times seven" (Matt. xviii. 21, 22), but it is again and again presented by Christ as a condition on which God's forgiveness of us is dependent. It is not simply that we are taught to pray, "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matt. vi. 12); a form of words in which it is presupposed that he who prays to God for forgiveness has already exercised forgiveness towards those who have wronged him. The matter is of so much importance in Christ's view that He does not simply qualify the prayer for the Divine forgiveness on the lips of His disciples in this way; He enforces the qualification by the consideration, positive and negative—"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. vi. 14, 15; Mark xi. 25, 26; Luke vi. 37). The double statement is not without its difficulty, especially on its positive side. It is easier to understand how the absence of a forgiving spirit, the presence of an unforgiving and vindictive one, should be the exercise of God's forgiveness. The man in that case is in no condition to receive it. Its bestowal, if we can conceive this possible, would be nothing less than a calamity, as tending to confirm a wrong moral state. The difficulty is to understand how the exercise of forgiveness by us should carry with

it the assurance of its bestowal by God. The force of the statement cannot be that our exercise of forgiveness towards others absolutely precedes and is the proper ground of God's forgiveness of us. It belongs to the general character of the Saviour's teaching to present a truth in the unqualified form; the qualification being readily supplied from other parts of His teaching. Strictly taken, this assurance, if absolute, would not so much complete, as it would cancel, the requirement of repentance and of faith, as conditioning the Divine forgiveness. Taken with the necessary qualification, it simply teaches that the exercise of forgiveness by us, the presence of a forgiving spirit, supplies so far the requisite condition for receiving the forgiveness of God; and even, as itself in many cases the result of grace, carries with it the augury of that forgiveness. The truth here on its darker side is still farther and even more impressively brought home by the parable of the unmerciful servant (Matt. xviii. 23-35), in which after the words with which the parable ends, "His lord was wroth and delivered him to the tormentors till he should pay all that was due," it is said: "So shall also My heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts" (R.V.).

#### IV.—THE RESULTS OF FORGIVENESS.

These results are not developed by the Saviour with anything like so much fulness as by the Apostles. *Peace* is contemplated as one of them. To the woman to whom He had said "Thy sins are forgiven," He afterwards added, "Go in peace". This consequence, however, of a forgiveness freely and directly bestowed receives far less prominence than in the epistles. In the same narrative, and yet more directly, *love* is recognised as a result of

forgiveness ; a love, as it were, proportioned to the forgiveness which has been received : " Her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much, but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little " (Luke vii. 47 ; comp. verses 42, 43). It is evident that we touch at this point what the Saviour regarded as a direct and powerful instrument for restoring and purifying human character. Forgiveness freely bestowed issues in grateful love. This love leads to obedience and therefore to holiness. The Apostle only develops this when he says : " But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound ; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord " (Rom. v. 20, 21). The statement in Luke vii. 47 raises two difficulties or at least suggests two questions : First, May forgiveness be only partial ? In that case, some would be only partially saved, or, rather, being only a little forgiven, would be actually lost. Second, Is it necessary to have sinned deeply in order to love much ? In regard to the first, it may be said that the Saviour does not directly teach how far the forgiveness of one sin carries with it the forgiveness of all sin ; and in regard to the second, it is sufficient to quote the words of Godet : " As to the great amount of sin necessary to loving much, we need add nothing to what each of us already has. It is sufficient to estimate accurately what we have. What is wanting to the best of us, in order to love much, is not sin but the knowledge of it."

#### V.—THE CHURCH'S POWER TO BESTOW FORGIVENESS.

" Whose soever sins ye remit (R.V., forgive), they are remitted (R.V., forgiven) unto them ; and whose soever sins ye

retain, they are retained" (John xx. 23). The passage is admittedly a difficult one, but some points connected with it are too plain to be misunderstood.

1. The power or prerogative, whichever we term it, is one which belongs to the whole Church of Christ, and not to any class or order in it. It did not belong to the Apostles as Apostles, and still less does it belong, as a distinctive prerogative, to those set apart to the Christian ministry. It belongs to them only as representing the Christian community, its mouthpiece as it were.

2. The power being one which belongs to the Christian community is one which does not lapse; it is permanent or perpetual, being in this respect distinguished from that given to Peter (Matt. xvi. 18, 19), which was distinctly personal, as it is distinguished also in its essential character, from that bestowed (Matt. xviii. 18) on all the Apostles, or on the Apostles as a body, and which had reference to the enactment of ordinances, and not to dealing with individual transgressors.

3. As to its scope, obviously it cannot be viewed as a power imparted to the Church to remit and retain the sins of men, irrespective of their remission and retainment by God. This prerogative, the forgiveness of sin in the sense of its bestowal or its refusal, is from the very nature of the case one which God must ever keep in His own hand. What belongs to the Church and to its ministers is to declare authoritatively the Divine forgiveness to be God's voice, as it were, in the way of assuring men of the remission of their sins by Almighty God, or of their retention. The Church's function in relation to forgiveness of sin is thus declarative rather than constitutive; its power is derivative and dependent not original. Its authority leans wholly upon the

mind of God, and as reflecting that mind. It is nevertheless a prerogative of the Christian Church of the very highest significance.

4. It is, as the context shows, a prerogative possessed and exercised in close connection with the presence in the Church of the Holy Spirit and the faculty of spiritual discernment consequent on this presence. It was when the Lord had breathed on them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," that He added, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained".



## CHAPTER XVII.

### JUSTIFICATION.

THERE are three questions of first moment here. 1. What is the nature of justification? that is, What does God do when He justifies the sinner? 2. What is the ground on which it proceeds? And 3. What relation does the faith of man sustain to this act of God? The three questions are very closely connected—the second and third especially.

#### I.—WHAT IS THE NATURE OF JUSTIFICATION?

It is an act of God. Does it denote simply a change of relationship to Him and to His law, or does it denote a change of character? In justifying, does God simply remove guilt from the sinner and accept him as righteous in His sight, or does He infuse grace and righteousness into the sinner, changing not only his standing, but his personal moral character? To put it more briefly, Does it mean to declare righteous, or does it mean to make righteous?

Now the view which must be taken here, if we are to abide by the Scriptural use of the term, is, that it is a forensic word, expressing the view which God takes of the soul in His character of Judge—His judgment or declaration in regard to the sinner who believes on Jesus, of his freedom from guilt, and of his acceptance as righteous in His sight. In other words, justification does not express the process by which the soul is made righteous, but the act in which God recognises it as righteous, whatever be the

ground on which that recognition proceeds. It has been said that it is both more and less than forgiveness. It does not contain the touching element of personal love which is felt in forgiveness, while it brings out more clearly the abolition and real undoing of sin. That it is a forensic, or judicial, declarative act is seen from the following considerations.

1. That is the natural and ordinary meaning of the term. The Greek word, *δικαίωω*, is the equivalent of the English word "justify," and that, as every one knows, means not to make just, but to pronounce just; to put a man right in relation to the law, not to rectify his character. This is evidently the meaning of the word in the text, "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men" (Luke xvi. 15; and see Matt. xi. 19; Luke vii. 29).

2. There are many instances of the word being used in Scripture in which, as applied to the sinner, it can bear no other meaning; in which the meaning of changing the character, instead of changing the standing, is an impossible, or all but an impossible one (Rom. iii. 23, 24). The reference is not to the state of moral defilement in which men are found, but to the guilt-bringing acts which they have committed, and the justification is said to be accomplished freely by grace, and through a redemption in which Christ is set forth as a propitiation, and to declare His righteousness in the way of forgiving sinful men (Gal. iii. 11; comp. with verse 13).

3. It is used as the antithesis of condemnation: "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me" (Job ix. 20); "It is God that justifieth; Who is he that condemneth?" (Rom. viii. 33, 34). Now to condemn is not to make a man bad, it is to declare or pronounce him to be so.

By consequence, the antithetical term must mean, not to make a man righteous, but to declare him to be so, to set him right in the eye of the law.

4. Attention is called to the equivalent forms of expression: "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Rom. iv. 7, 8); "Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. v. 9, 10); "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John iii. 17, 18).

5. Any other view has for its result the effacement of the distinction between justification and sanctification. There seems no reason to doubt that justification is a judicial act of God; one in which He removes guilt and accepts the sinner as righteous in His sight.

## II.—WHAT IS THE GROUND ON WHICH JUSTIFICATION PROCEEDS?

To what has God regard when He justifies, that is, pronounces righteous, a sinner who believes in Jesus? The answers given to this question resolve themselves really into two—either to something within the man, his faith, or the personal goodness of which faith in Christ is the germ, the seminal principle; or something without the man, the obedience, active or passive, of Jesus Christ; in other words His

atoning death and His perfect righteousness. Let us look at the former view in the first place.

1. It has been said that men are justified on the ground of their faith in Jesus Christ, viewed as the seminal principle of personal righteousness, as carrying in it the promise and the potency of ultimate conformity to the law of God. The sinner who believes in Jesus Christ is not, indeed, as yet personally righteous up to the standard of the Divine requirement, but in his faith God sees the active principle of righteousness which will in the end bring him up to that standard. On this view the atonement of Christ, His sacrifice for sin, is connected with the justification of the sinner, but only in an indirect way: thus, the faith which justifies is not simply a general reliance on the character of God. "It includes a recognition of our sin, and a concurrence in God's judgment on it, and it attaches itself with all its force to the atonement made by Christ, and as the thought of Christ's atonement enters deeper and deeper into his heart, he naturally without any forcing dies to sin with Christ, so that sin actually loses its hold upon him, and becomes extinguished" (Mason).

It will be noticed that when the reference to the atonement takes this form, it is no longer viewed as the objective ground of the sinner's justification, but as the means of imparting a transforming and sanctifying power to that faith which is really made the ground. Take the following as a statement of this view: "Such faith has more than the negative virtue of expelling sin, it has the positive virtue of appropriating the life of Christ. Realised union with Him acquired by no merits of ours, but involving a willing conformity to Him, is assuredly a ground on which a righteous God can justify the greatest of sinners. Nor need He

behold His justification in reserve until faith has had its perfect work. The earliest beginnings of such are met by a recognition that guilt has passed away, because that new principle which is at work in the soul is the pledge of future perfection" (Mason). This does not only mean that faith in Christ, in His death and in His risen life, in Himself, as embracing all that He is and has done, transforms the character, which no one will deny, but that it is the fact that it does so which makes it justifying—in other words, that it is not the sacrifice and righteousness of Jesus Christ to which God has regard in justifying the sinner—but it is the believer's character as changed by his faith in that sacrifice and righteousness to which God has regard. It would not be correct to say that in this view the atonement and righteousness of Christ has no connection with the sinner's justification, but it has no direct connection. It is really justification by character. God reckons the man righteous, because he is personally righteous, not yet wholly so, but on the way to be wholly so. It is not possible to see how a view of justification of this kind could be sustained on the basis of Scripture teaching. One or two passages might seem to give plausibility to it, as, for example, Romans iv. 3, perhaps even Romans viii. 2, but as will become apparent when the texts are examined which sustain the other view, it runs counter to the prevailing teaching of Scripture on the subject. The practical effect of it, moreover, is to involve the pardon of the sinner, his acceptance of God, in the greatest uncertainty. The Romanist, to whose view this approximates, was quite consistent in saying that assurance of salvation was not attainable in the present life. The whole force of the Reformation as a religious movement lay in the fact that it placed the foundation of the

sinner's acceptance wholly in the objective work of Christ appropriated by faith.

2. The other view, then, of the ground on which God proceeds in justifying the sinner who believes in Jesus—the view presented in our Confession and Catechism and in the Confessions and Catechisms of the Churches of the Reformation generally, is, that the sacrifice of Christ, His obedience, active and passive, His righteousness, supplies the ground of our justification. To support this view, the difficulty is not to find passages of Scripture, it is to make a selection from them.

(a) Forgiveness of sins is, if not identical with justification, at least an essential part of it, and so all texts which connect forgiveness directly with the sacrifice of Christ as its ground, furnish evidence that the sacrifice is the direct ground on which the sinner's justification rests. Take the following: "My blood of the covenant which is shed for many unto remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi. 28, R.V.); "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Eph. i. 7). The redemption is viewed here, not as that from the power of sin, but as from its guilt—its issue is forgiveness, and it is accomplished through the blood. Take also Galatians iii. 10, 13. In the former verse men are viewed as under the curse of the law, which demands an obedience which no man has rendered. In the latter they are said to be freed, literally bought from under it, by Christ being made a curse for them, that is, dying, and in death undergoing the penalty of sin. Here, it will be observed, the ground is objective throughout, not something wrought in men, but something wrought or suffered for them. Once more take: "And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

and He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John ii. 1, 2); that is, the believer, for it is of such the Apostle is speaking, is protected against the penal consequences of sin, or is assured of forgiveness, through the intercession of Jesus Christ, taking up and applying the expiation for sin which He made, or rather which He, the crucified and risen One, is. Again, the ground on which forgiveness is bestowed, or security obtained, is not subjective, but objective.

(b) Justification, or what is the full equivalent thereof, is expressly said to rest on the sacrifice of Christ, the blood of Christ, the righteousness of Christ: "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 24-26). The reference in the preceding verse (*ἡμαρτον*) is not to the state of moral defilement in which men are found, but to the guilt-bringing acts which they have committed, and the justification of those thus guilty is said to be accomplished freely by grace and through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. Now, everything turns on what we are to understand as the force of redemption here, the light in which it is regarded. Christ redeems man from the guilt of sin, and He redeems man from the power or dominion of sin. To which is the reference? If to the latter, the text would go to support the view that men are justified by God, on the ground of the spiritual and moral change wrought in them by Christ. But both the words which

precede and the words which follow show that this is not the meaning. Attention has been already called to the fact that the reference in the preceding verse is to sinful, that is, guilt-bringing acts, and not to a state of moral defilement; and next the redemption is said, in what follows, to be accomplished by setting Christ forth as *ἱλαστήριον*, as propitiatory sacrifice. Now, the direct object of a propitiatory sacrifice is never to change the moral state of the offerer, but always to make atonement for his sin, symbolically under the Old Testament, really under the New Testament. This view is confirmed by that which follows, "to declare His righteousness"; and again, "that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus". This view of the meaning of "redemption" is confirmed by Ephesians i. 7, where the same word is used.

The testimony of the words used in Romans v. 9 is to the same effect, "*δικαιωθέντες νῦν ἐν τῷ αἵματι*". Keeping to that which we have seen to be the meaning of the term "justified," that is, treated as righteous, we have here "the blood," that is, the propitiatory sacrifice, as that in which, or on the ground of which, the justifying act proceeds. The fact that here the justification is said to take place by the blood of Christ without any mention of "faith" shows that in the matter of our justification faith is viewed simply as the appropriating organ of the righteousness of Christ, not as a state of mind in itself propitiating the Divine good pleasure. "We shall be saved from wrath," that is here, the wrath connected with the final judgment. "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 21). The verb justified is not here, but the equivalent



noun is, "*δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ*," "the righteousness of God". Now, while the phrase, "made the righteousness of God," might perhaps bear the meaning of "make personally righteous according to the Divine requirement," a moment's consideration will show that it cannot have that meaning here. There are two things compared in this carefully balanced sentence—"Christ made sin," and the believer "made the righteousness of God"—the meaning of the one clause determines the meaning of the other. As the former cannot mean Christ was made personally sinful, neither can the latter, believers are made personally righteous. "The balance of this sentence evidently is, that Christ was treated in a way in which He did not deserve to be treated, and that we are treated in a way in which we do not deserve for His sake."

Take again, "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Rom. v. 19). The words cannot mean "made personally righteous". Neither the connection, nor the term employed, "*κατασταθήσονται*," will admit such a meaning. The verb cannot designate change of character but only change of standing. It really means, shall be placed in the category of righteous persons, those counted righteous by God.

These passages will perhaps suffice to show on what ground God proceeds, what that is to which He has regard in justifying the sinner.

### III.—HOW IS FAITH RELATED TO THE SINNER'S JUSTIFICATION, WHAT IS ITS FUNCTION?

This is almost settled by what has been established under the former head. It is not the meritorious ground of justi-

fication ; that, as has just been proved, is the sacrifice, the obedience, the righteousness of Christ. It is simply, so far as our justification is concerned, the instrumental cause ; it appropriates the pardon, the righteousness, offered in Jesus Christ, and only as such—as receiving Christ and His righteousness—does it justify. The preposition is *δια* with the genitive, never *δια* with the accusative, “through faith,” not “on account of faith”. The sinner is justified in or by believing, not for or on account of believing. The texts are too numerous to quote in which this phraseology is made use of. Take just one : “That I may . . . be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Phil. iii. 9). First, as to the righteousness here spoken of. It is not so evident as in some other passages that it is not personal character which is meant, but the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and the ground of our justification ; yet it is almost certainly the latter. It stands opposed to a righteousness which Paul called his own, and of the law, that is, it consists in obedience to the law. Now, if the righteousness here meant was personal righteousness, wrought in him through his union to the Saviour, it would be his own, just as much as the other ; only attained in a different way.

This righteousness, on the other hand, is said to be “from God,” and must be the same with that which is called “the righteousness of God” (Rom. iii. 21), the righteousness which is provided by Him, and avails with Him, and which is said to be “unto all and upon all them that believe”. Here as in so many other passages it is said to be “through the faith of Christ”. In other words it is, the means (*δια*), not the source (*εκ*), of justification—and not even by faith

as such, but by a faith which embraces Christ, or, as in Abraham's case, the promise of Him, or the grace which was to come in and through Him.

#### IV.—OBJECTIONS TO THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION AS NOW STATED.

1. How can God hold a man to be righteous, give him the standing of a righteous person, who is not righteous? The answer to that is that He does so, on the ground of the absolute righteousness of Him with whom the sinner has become one. The member is justified in the Head and for His sake. He is not declared to be personally righteous. He is simply accounted righteous. In any case it is the doctrine of Scripture. It is the very glory of the Gospel that the grace in which it is our privilege to trust is the grace of that "God who justified the ungodly".

2. This method of justification has in it something unreal and artificial. "There is reality," it is said, "when you get to an inward change"; there is no reality in being counted righteous for the sake of another. There might be something in this if it stood alone; it would be salvation by proxy, which no one holds, and which therefore one does not need to defend. There is nothing in it, when in justification we are at once united to Christ and brought near to God. Still it must be maintained that the ultimate reason of the gracious standing of believers lies not in themselves, in any change which grace has wrought in them, but solely in Him who represents them before God; and this is not forced or artificial or unreal, but a glorious truth of Scripture—the truth which has fed the religious life of the saints of God during all these centuries.

3. It is said this method of justification is dangerous to morality, to personal righteousness of heart and life. This objection will say that if we are to have the best security for holiness, something of what we are or have become through grace must enter into the ground of a sinner's acceptance or justification. It is a striking proof that the view of justification presented is the scriptural one, for exactly the same objection was taken to Paul's teaching on the subject. He meets it in the sixth and seventh chapters of the Romans. His very justification, it is said, forbids his continuance in sin. His justification is the result of his union to the Saviour by faith. Thus united, it is impossible he should remain in sin. All experience shows that there is no motive so powerful or effective in leading men to holiness of life as the experience of redemption through Jesus Christ, and forgiveness for His sake. This is about the deepest thing in the Epistle to the Romans, and if men can get a better motive power than the sense of obligation to Christ as the author of forgiveness, and love to Him, it is a region of spiritual dynamics that has been hitherto concealed. "Being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (Rom. vi. 22).

In conclusion let it be said, there is an ever-accumulating argument in favour of the doctrine as now stated in the history of the Church. It is to be confessed that the doctrine of Paul on the subject is heard feebly and indistinctly in the second and third centuries, though it is very distinctly expressed in one anonymous work, the *Epistle to Diognetus*. In the following century, the subject of the person of Christ, the establishment and vindication of His Divine nature, absorbed too much the thought of the Church to allow

much attention being given to the doctrinal study of His atonement and of its application in justification. Again, it is in connection with the doctrine of sin and regeneration, rather than with pardon and acceptance, that the doctrine of grace was developed by Augustine; but the deep view he was led to take of sin could, when wrought out, lead to no other view of justification than that by grace and through Jesus Christ. We hear it rising up in some of the monuments of the Middle Ages, as has been said, "as in the *Dies Iræ*, with a grandeur and a tenderness which overawe, while they cheer every devout spirit to this day".

King, of majesty tremendous,  
Who dost freely grace extend us,  
Fount of pity, succour send us.

Then, it need not be said, it was this truth—justification by faith alone, and by faith viewed as receiving and resting upon the atoning work of Christ—that was the inspiring principle of the Reformation, an essentially religious movement. The question which stirred the soul of Luther was, How shall man be just with God? What is the basis of a sinner's peace with Him? It was fought out first as a long personal struggle; victory came, and peace and strength with it, when the merits of the Saviour were seen to be the alone ground of the sinner's acceptance. Justification by faith, viewed not as itself intrinsically virtuous but as appropriating Christ, especially as the sacrifice for our sins, was the battle-cry of the Reformation; was the spring of that religious movement which changed the face of Northern Europe, emancipating it from superstitious and slavish fears, and making it thrill with a free, brave, joyous, religious life, and with such bursts of sacred song as the

world had not heard since a heavenly choir announced the birth of the Saviour of mankind.

It was the centre, the informing principle, of the work of Calvin and of Knox, as it was of Luther's, filling them, too, with a sacred enthusiasm. We find it stirring not only intense natures like theirs, but lifting into the same passion a calmer nature like Hooker's. "Such are we in the sight of God the Father, as is the very Son of God Himself. Let it be counted folly or frenzy, or fury, or whatsoever. It is our wisdom and our comfort. We care for no knowledge in the world but this, that man hath sinned and God hath suffered; that God made Himself the sin of men, and that men are made the righteousness of God."

And when times of spiritual declension came, it was the reassertion of this truth which broke the drowsy lethargy into which the Church had fallen. The crisis in the soul of Wesley, we are told, was decided by Luther's Preface to the Romans, in which this doctrine is taught with such power, and thus the mighty awakening in England and America, too, under the preaching of Wesley, and the parallel movement under Whitefield, with all their blessed consequences to this day, were due to the discovery and preaching of this doctrine by men who had themselves found peace and life through it.

Again, about the same time, it was this truth, preached by Ebenezer Erskine, and set to song in the sonnets of his brother Ralph, that kept alive the flame of religious life among the common people of Scotland in days of prevailing coldness, and it was the same truth, rediscovered by Chalmers, and finding trumpet utterance in his impassioned eloquence, that broke the reign of cold Moderatism in the Scottish Church. Times of revival, as in New England

under Edwards, in Old England under Simeon and Newton, in Scotland under Burns and M'Cheyne, and not less in Ireland, have been uniformly times when this doctrine has come to the front.

It is the charm of our best religious literature, whether sermonic or biographical. Take it out of the immortal work of Bunyan, the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and not all the genius it displays would save it from forgetfulness.

It is that which lends undying attractiveness and power over us to our most cherished hymns. It is heard in the hymn of Wesley, but really coming from the Moravian brotherhood at Herrnhut :—

O love, thou bottomless abyss,  
My sins are swallowed up in Thee,  
Covered is my unrighteousness,  
No spot of guilt remains in me,  
While Jesus' blood through earth and skies  
Mercy, free, boundless Mercy cries.

In that of Toplady :—

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee.

In that of Cowper, true poet, and true Christian :—

There is a fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Immanuel's veins ;  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,  
Lose all their guilty stains.

These are the hymns which we would like to have sung to us as we lay our heads down on the dying pillow. Be sure that the truth which we need in dying is the truth which we and others, sinners like ourselves, cannot dispense with in living.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### SANCTIFICATION.

AS justification is a change of state, or of standing, in relation to God, sanctification is a change of character. The direct ground of the former we have seen to be the merits of the righteousness of Christ, reckoned or imputed to us. The ground, or not so much the ground as the essence, of the latter is the righteousness of Christ infused into or assimilated by us. Both alike imply faith, but in the case of the one faith has respect very specially to the Saviour in His priestly character, as making atonement for sin, and denotes its trust and acceptance of that atonement; in the case of the other, it has before it the whole living personal Christ, and denotes that communion with Christ in virtue of which His life is not imputed but instilled and becomes the life of the believer. Both are directly connected with Christ. Believers are justified and are sanctified in Christ. He Himself is made unto them "righteousness and sanctification" (1 Cor. i. 30); but "Christ *for* us" is the ground of the one, "Christ *in* us" is the explanation or root of the other. The following points will be noted in connection with this subject.

1. As to its nature—what it is. It is the actual and gradual formation of a holy character, the progressive assimilation of Christ's life and righteousness issuing in the progressive development of likeness to Him. Justification is an act of God. Sanctification is a work; it is a con-



tinuous process, lasting we may say as long as life, to which the means of grace, the word and the sacraments, and the daily trials and duties of life are subservient. This is not inconsistent, however, with special seasons which serve as crises in the life of grace, when the soul stirs itself up to be completely delivered to the Spirit of God. There may be a certain amount of truth therefore in the view which is held by some in these days, that sanctification is the result of a second conversion; if by that is meant the conscious and deliberate acceptance of Christ for holiness, as formerly for pardon or justification only, we would have to admit the possibility not of a second conversion only but of repeated surrenders of the soul to Christ to be filled with His spirit, ruled by His will, and made the instrument of His purposes. The essence of sanctification, or sanctified character, is doing justice, loving mercy and walking humbly with God (Mic. vi. 8); living soberly, righteously and godly (Tit. ii. 12); yielding our members servants to righteousness unto holiness (Rom. vi. 19).

2. As to its relation to justification. This would evidently be differently construed according to the different views taken of justification and its ground. According to the view in which faith as the seminal principle of a new life is the ground of justification, we would have to say that justification was the first stage in the sinner's sanctification. Thus Mason says: "That infusion of the new principle of righteousness which qualifies us for justification is the beginning of the life-long process which we understand by sanctification". This view, however, as we have seen, really proceeds on a confounding of justification and sanctification.

On the view of justification which we have been led to

take as taught in the word of God, the connection might be stated as follows—justification (*a*) in delivering the believer from guilt takes away a great discouragement or hindrance to holiness ; (*b*) in restoring him to the Divine favour it opens the way for the reception of the aids of God's holy spirit (Rom. vi. 14) ; and (*c*) it brings a powerful impulse of gratitude into exercise (Rom. vii. 6 ; viii. 3, 4 ; 2 Cor. v. 14, 15 ; 1 John iii. 3).

Sanctification is the end to which justification is but the means or the road. Character is the highest, the most enduring good in the world, and holy character, that which conforms its subject to Jesus Christ, is the highest form of the most enduring good. In the end destiny must follow character. Happiness is but the bloom of goodness. This is the ultimate end of redemption. Pardon, justification, are simply steps towards and mainly valuable as such. This truth is presented in many texts (Gal. i. 4 ; vi. 15 ; Eph. v. 25-27 ; 1 Peter ii. 24).

3. As to its relation to faith. The relation here is of the closest and indeed most obvious character. (*a*) Faith in Christ as has been seen is an essentially moral exercise of soul. It is no mere intellectual assent to truth, even Divine truth ; it is confidence (*fiducia*) in a person—and in such a person as is Jesus Christ. If it does not grow out of love, it involves love, and so has in it the active principle of all goodness or holiness. (*b*) Then faith is the instrument of a vital, spiritual union with the Saviour, in virtue of which those possessing it share in His life. There is more here than fellowship such as a man may have with his friend, though we know by experience how transforming that may be, so that even to have that fellowship with Christ which is realised in thought and prayer as its utterance

cannot be other than sanctifying. But the union which is affirmed in Scripture goes far in advance of such fellowship. It is more inward and more intimate. The believer is said to be in Christ, as a member of His body, or of the body of which He is the Head ; as the branch is in the vine. This union is called "mystical" because it so far transcends all the analogies of earthly relationships, in its intimate character, as to be incapable of being construed by our intelligence. The true Christian knows that it is, he can scarcely be said to know what it is. In consequence of it, the believer is said to die in Christ's death, to rise in His resurrection, to reproduce, as it were, in His experience the stages through which Jesus passed (Rom. vi. 1-4). The bearing of all this on the progressive sanctification of the believer is too obvious to need exposition.

4. The agent of the believer's sanctification is God. It is the work of God's free grace ; supernatural, therefore, as the result, not simply of unaided human effort or of the natural influence of Divine truth, but of the direct forth-putting of Divine power. This is constantly taught in the New Testament. It may be said to be the distinctive work in redemption of the Holy Spirit. He is the sanctifier (1 Cor. vi. 11 ; 2 Thess. ii. 13). As the very aim of His incarnation and death, it is also said to be the work of the Son (Eph. v. 25, 26 ; Tit. ii. 14). In other texts it is ascribed simply to God : "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. ii. 13) ; so as to accomplish the purpose of His grace. It is very instructive to note that in three passages (Rom. xvi. 20 ; 1 Thess. v. 23 ; Heb. xiii. 20, 21), in which this work is ascribed to Him, He is designated "the God of Peace". As a result of this Divine agency exerted, true sanctification must always

have in it the element of humility. To the end its deepest feeling will find expression in the word, "By the grace of God I am what I am".

5. This agency of God while it motives and sustains the activity of man, does not supersede it. The same writer who speaks of him as the workmanship of God, and in the very context in which God is said to work in him "to will and to do," summons him to work out his own salvation. In passages too numerous to quote, he is called to do this. "Let us cleanse ourselves . . . perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. vii. 1); "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. v. 24); "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth" (Col. iii. 5). This is too obvious to insist on. There is no influence of grace which supersedes human freedom and responsibility, or makes human effort unnecessary. It is important, however, to understand that the effort is most fruitful of good which is directed to keeping the channel of connection open and the fellowship close between the soul and Christ. Sanctification is not simply a work of self-discipline, with a free forgiveness as the starting-point and the inspiration. It is conditioned throughout by the inflow of Christ's life: "He is made unto us . . . sanctification" (1 Cor. i. 30).

6. This sanctification extends to the whole person. This is proved (a) by the nature or necessity of the case. The soul or thinking person is a unit. It is the same self-identical being who thinks and feels and wills. All the parts of the nature suffer through sin—though in different degrees. The understanding is darkened, as well as the affections and will perverted (Eph. iv. 18), and all in turn share in the change wrought in sanctification. (b) By Scripture (Rom.

vi. 13 ; Eph. i. 18 ; Col. iii. 10 ; 1 Thess. v. 23 ; 1 John iv. 7) taken together.

7. Perfectionism or the holiness doctrine. Perfectionism means, stated broadly, that it is possible for a believer in this world to become perfectly free from sin, and entirely conformed to the law under which, as a believer, he now lives. It is held by Palagians, who minimise the effects of the Fall, and who magnify the natural ability or power of man ; by Romanists, by holding, on the one hand, that the law must be possible to those on whom it is binding—God does not command impossibilities—and, on the other, by the distinction between mortal and venial sins, and by the view that the concupiscence that remains in the bosom of the renewed is not itself sin ; allowance is thus made for sins of ignorance, inattention and passion ; and by Arminians, who hold that a man can, with the assistance of Divine grace, keep all the commandments of God perfectly, according to the Gospel or covenant of grace. It is to be noticed that in this case too, the law which can be perfectly kept is not the original and absolute law of holiness under which Adam was created, but the “law of Christ,” or Christ’s law of love, and also that sin, properly so called, that is a voluntary transgression of a known law, is distinguished from sin, improperly so called, that is involuntary transgression consequent on the ignorance and mistakes inseparable from mortality. Accordingly, Dr. Peck declares that the obedience of the perfect Christian cannot bear the light of God’s justice, but needs atoning blood ; he must continue to say “forgive us our trespasses”. Perhaps there should not be any quarrel with a claim to a similar perfection of this kind—the quarrel would rather be with the name.

It will be found that the claim to have attained a state

in which there is no longer sin—or sinless perfection—is founded on wrong superficial views of what sin is. If sin is “any want of conformity unto, or transgression of the law of God,” and that law is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, strength and mind, and thy neighbour as thyself, it does seem strange that any should claim to have attained it, and one can understand the statement of Professor Duncan, who is reported as having said that he had less quarrel with the doctrine of human perfection, but he would not like to see the man that thought himself perfect.

At the same time there is some lesson to be learned by the Church in these days. This term “Holiness Christians” would hardly have got a footing if there had not been found numbers of people in the churches who are in a vague way expecting salvation through Christ, but who do not recognise the call to holiness of life. It scarcely needs to be said, that while personal holiness is not the ground of our justification, there can be no coming to God for justification without at the same time coming to Him for deliverance from sin itself; or, if there is any such, it will miss its end.


## CHAPTER XIX.

### LIFE.

IT is unnecessary to point out how important a term this is in the system of truth contained in the New Testament. It is almost more than any other term the distinctive one in the Gospel. And the most striking thing connected with it is, that while the term itself is not new—is entirely familiar—on Christ's lips it has a new meaning, and in that meaning becomes significant of the great bestowment of redemption. We cannot, therefore, study too closely the various relations in which it is set in the Saviour's words.

#### I.—ITS NATURE.

The term, while one of much more frequent occurrence in the fourth gospel, is found, as was to be expected, in the synoptical gospels as well, but perhaps with some diversity of meaning. One of the earliest, if not the earliest, uses of the term is found in the Sermon on the Mount. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life" (Matt. vii. 14). Little assistance is given us by its use in this passage to determine its meaning. It is evidently viewed as something distinct from the earthly, mundane life which was already theirs to whom the words were spoken, even when that life takes on forms of highest prosperity. The Saviour expressly repudiates the identification of life, or what is worthy of being so called, with the possession of external goods: "A man's life consisteth  
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not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke xii. 15). More light is thrown on its nature when it is characterised as "eternal life": "And in the world to come eternal life" (Mark x. 30). It is life then over which death has no power; life which, whatever its nature, is not limited to the present scene of existence, if even it is attained here. In the synoptical gospels eternal life seems to designate the blessedness on which the followers of Christ shall enter when the present state has closed. It is regarded therefore as pertaining to the future (Mark x. 30; Luke xviii. 30); as the treasure, or part of the treasure, laid up for them in heaven. In the fourth gospel, on the other hand, the prevailing representation of it is that of a *present* possession of the believer: "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life" (John iii. 36, R.V.); "I *give* unto them eternal life" (John x. 28; so John v. 24-25; vi. 47). This is, of course, quite consistent with its possession in a future state, and its possession even in a fuller form. It still remains to be determined what this life exactly is. It has been argued with considerable force by Wendt that it is "identical with the new nature consisting of Divine Spirit, which is produced in man through the new birth effected by God's Spirit," that it is: "A mode of being not of a creaturely, but of a Divine character, and consists in the possession of the Spirit of God". To sustain this contention reliance is mainly placed on the course of thought in the third chapter of John, in which the Saviour leads up from the subject of regeneration by the Spirit of God in the fifth verse to that of eternal life in the fifteenth. The connection suggested, however, is somewhat forced. The connection of the possession of this great bestowment with Jesus Christ would seem to be of



a more direct kind than the view now given implies. The statement is, "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life" (John iii. 36), or in the language of the writer of the fourth gospel in his letter: "He that hath the Son hath life" (1 John v. 12). Were the view of Wendt correct, it would rather need to be read: "He that hath the Spirit hath life". The life then must be regarded as consisting in the possession of Jesus Christ, and as this possession is only possible to faith and love, we may say, in Jesus Christ known, loved and trusted.

In one passage we have, what in form at least might be regarded as a definition of this "life": "This is life eternal, that they should know Thee the only true God, and Him whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ" (John xvii. 3, R.V.). It has been argued indeed by Wendt and others that the whole force of this statement is to indicate in a pregnant way the means by which eternal life is reached, not that in which it consists. But the words do not readily lend themselves to such a construction. What they seem naturally to teach is the identification of life with the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ. This knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ, a knowledge which implies love, possible indeed only to love, the Saviour will say, is not simply the means of attaining life, the gate, as it were, by which it is reached; it is that which constitutes it, it is life, life eternal. The soul lives as it knows, and because it knows, God ever blessed and Jesus Christ His Son. It will be noticed that the knowledge which is synonymous with life is that of the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He did send. It is not meant that there are two distinct objects of knowledge, of one of which the mind might conceivably remain ignorant while cognizant of the

other. The opposite seems implied in the very form of the expression—that the object of knowledge in this case is really one, the Father in the Son, or the Son in and with the Father.

## II.—THE RELATION IN WHICH THIS "LIFE" STANDS TO JESUS CHRIST.

1. Its bestowment is the aim of His mission. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). He was sent of God. He came to avert a destruction in actual progress of accomplishment, to replace it by life—eternal life. The antithesis in which it is set to "perishing," as well as the epithet "everlasting" applied to it, suggests the element of indestructibility or imperishableness as characteristic of this highest bestowment of Divine grace. To this head belongs also the saying, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John x. 10). The qualitative force of the word life comes out strikingly in this statement. Christ's great gift of life is one which admits of degrees, which mere existence does not. It is true, indeed, that the word translated "more abundantly," or in the Revised Version "abundantly" simply, does not agree with "life," but it can scarcely mean something more excellent than life, as glory; so it was understood by Chrysostom. The idea is rather that the life which Christ came to bestow is bestowed in no scanty measure.

2. He is Himself the "life" in personal form. "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John xiv. 6). The statement here is in advance of the preceding one. It warrants the assertion that Jesus does not simply impart life, He Himself is it. The principle of life is immanent in Him. Man

therefore come to obtain it, in obtaining Him. The soul which opens to receive Him receives at the same time life in the high and blessed sense of that word. The same claim is made by Christ, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John xi. 25), where it is connected with the triumph over physical death. The connection has been differently construed. Having regard to the order of the words, the life here has been regarded as that life of blessedness in heaven which is consequent on the resurrection. It has been so by Meyer. It seems preferable to regard the thought of the Saviour as passing from the resurrection to that deeper and more inward change which is its condition. Thus taken, the words suggest the truth, that Christ is the resurrection in virtue of being the life. The physical change denoted by the former shall follow consequent on the spiritual transformation implied in the latter. The resurrection of the body is guaranteed by the true life of the soul. It is essentially the same truth (though presented in a slightly different light) which is forthcoming in John xiv. 19, "Because I live, ye shall live also," though the emphasis in this case seems to lie rather in the effects of the believer's possession of life, than in the fact of its derivation from Christ. The words must be read in close connection with what immediately precedes: "The world seeth Me no more; but ye see Me: because I live, ye shall live also". The Saviour disappearing from earth through the gate of death, and becoming thus invisible to the world, shall still through His Spirit make good a sensible presence to His true followers, in virtue at once of His enduring life, and of their life as dependent on and insured by His life. The use of the present, "I live," as applied to Himself, in contradistinction from the future, "Ye shall live," as applied

to them, must be regarded as significant. By the former the Saviour presents Himself as the possessor of a life which abides even in death—as the living One ; by the latter He gives the assurance that these should share in this life, in other words, that the life which was original in Him should be communicated to them.

3. From the truth that Jesus is “the life” there comes a whole series of statements speaking of appropriation of Him under the figure of eating and drinking, as the indispensable condition of the maintenance of life in His people: “I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever : and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (John vi. 51); “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life ; and I will raise him up at the last day” (John vi. 53-54). The two points which stand out here are : (a) That it is Christ in His humanity (flesh), and yet also in that humanity offered up in sacrifice (blood), that is the life of men. It is the personal Christ, not the doctrine about Him, but Himself, and Himself at once as living and as surrendered in sacrifice, who becomes the life of each individual, and of the Church as a whole ; and (b) That He becomes this in virtue only of an act of appropriation so positive and definite that it can be called “eating the flesh, and drinking the blood of the Son of Man”. The reciprocity of the believer is, thus, not of the passive sort. To eat and to drink is to appropriate by a voluntary act that which is without, and then to assimilate it and make it part of oneself. Similar is the force of the words of Christ spoken to the woman at the well : “The water that I shall

give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John iv. 14). Here the life is seen growing and expanding under the Divine bestowment, the water which Christ gives, when that is inwardly received. The supply is now within the man, and serves not for the moment only. Fed from an exhaustless source, it is perpetually renewed.

4. The connection between Christ and the truth which He speaks is such, He being at once the messenger and the message, that the same virtue is ascribed to the hearing and the keeping of His sayings which is ascribed to the receiving of Himself: "He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life" (John v. 24). Another statement is in the same line: "If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death" (John viii. 51). To "see death" just means to die. It does not mean to feel the bitterness of death, as Stier has interpreted it. The apparent strangeness of the statement is explained by the fact that death is not used by the Saviour in the sense of the death of the body, which is no more reckoned death than the life of the body is reckoned life. Westcott's note on the passage is: "Just as life in St. John is present, or rather eternal (xvii. 3), so death is not an event but a state, that selfish isolation which is the negation of life".

### III.—THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH IT IS ATTAINED.

1. Here as elsewhere the fundamental condition is faith; the appropriation of the living Christ which comes through faith—the eating of the flesh of the Son of Man, and the drinking of His blood, can only be viewed as the working of faith. It is just faith in action. The texts here are too numerous to quote. Let these suffice: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have ever-

lasting life" (John iii. 16); "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (John iii. 36); "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me hath everlasting life" (John vi. 47).

2. A second condition to which Christ gives prominence, and which forms indeed one of the distinctive features in His teaching, is the surrender, or at least the readiness to surrender, all that constitutes life in the lower sense: "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it" (Matt. x. 39); "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it" (Matt. xvi. 25; similarly Luke xvii. 33). It is true the term rendered life here is not the same as that with which we have been dealing. It is that more frequently rendered "soul". Still the correspondence between the life of the Saviour's gift and the life of these passages is more than a verbal one. The word is used in them in a double sense, in a lower and a higher, and the force of the statement is, that a surrender of life in the lower sense, or at least a readiness to make that surrender, is the indispensable condition to securing life in the higher sense, the true personal life, the life of the man Godward, as distinguished not so much from the life of the body, as from the life of the man in the perishable earthly interests. If even this is not exactly "the eternal life" of the fourth gospel, it is at least kindred to it (comp. Matt. xix. 16, 21; Mark x. 17, 21; Luke xviii. 18, 22). Thus the life which Christ bestows, which consists in the knowledge of God and of Him, which becomes the portion of the heart which is opened to receive Him, is not something distinct from, or foreign to, the true life of the man. It constitutes that life. The soul first truly lives in gaining it.

## CHAPTER XX.

### OBEDIENCE.

WE enter at this point the distinctively ethical sphere of the Saviour's teachings. We encounter fewer difficulties in this sphere. The statements to be passed in review have less speculative importance, but they have not less practical significance, and must on no account be overlooked, or even hurriedly considered. For if it is a grave misconception to regard the Saviour as simply the teacher of a new and higher ethics, it is an error only less grave to leave His ethical teaching out of view in an estimate of His work. His statements regarding obedience, when carefully examined, present the subject under the following aspects.

#### I.—OBEDIENCE AS EXEMPLIFIED BY HIMSELF.

The Saviour in His human life and manifestation comes before us in the gospels in two quite distinct lights; in the one as a messenger from God, His Son; in the other, as the Head of His redeemed people. In the latter capacity it is His to command obedience; in the former to render it, and in virtue of this to become the pattern for His followers. This obedience, the acceptance of the Divine Will in duty and in endurance, He exemplified always. Occasionally only does He give expression to it in words, as when He says, "I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (John vi. (386)

38); or again, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish (R.V., accomplish) His work" (John iv. 34). The identification of the Saviour's life on earth with the carrying out of the will of the Father, that is, with obedience, could not be more strongly expressed. It is the unbroken consciousness of rendering this obedience which finds expression in another statement, also furnished by the fourth Evangelist, "I do always those things that please Him" (John viii. 29). This obedience in Christ's case was consummated in suffering. The prayer which rose from His heart, amid the agonies of the garden, closed with the words, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt"; "If this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done" (Matt. xxvi. 39, 42). This is the real glory of the Saviour's life, more than that of supernatural birth, more than that of attendant miracle—the glory of constant and unbroken obedience to the will of God, as that will was unfolded to Him from day to day, assuming in the end the form of subjection to a cruel and shameful death. The Christian ideal is thus not self-mastery, which ends in that surrender; it is not freedom but obedience, or it is the freedom which is realised in obedience.

## II.—OBEDIENCE IS THE CONSTITUENT OF CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP.

This has been treated of already under a previous head, discipleship; it is the less necessary to dwell on it here. The pertinent word of the Saviour at this point is, "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven" (Matt. vii. 21); and again, "Ye



are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John xv. 14). The obedience is viewed as rendered in the one case to the will of the Father, in the other, to the will or word of Christ. We do not need to learn that these are not different. Even those who deny the unity of essence of the Father and the Son admit the ethical oneness. The main point to be noted here is that obedience, whether regarded as rendered to the Father or to the Saviour, is not simply the evidence of discipleship, it is its essence. It is not only what marks out a Christian, it is what makes him. Regeneration, repentance, faith, may be the conditions of discipleship, the qualifications which, in the case of fallen man, render discipleship under Christ possible; obedience is that which constitutes it. To lose our will in the will of Christ, to obey it in things great and in things small, that is to be a disciple, that is to be a Christian. It is obvious that it is by this especially, if not indeed exclusively, that we are conformed to Christ. In His case there was no room for regeneration, none for repentance, none for faith even, at least in some of the directions in which we are called to exercise it; but of obedience His life was full. On this ground the Master and the disciple meet as nowhere else.

### III.—OBEDIENCE IN ITS RESULTS OR REWARDS.

1. A clearer discernment of truth and duty. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself" (John vii. 17). Here, indeed, the statement is made regarding the result, not so much of actual obedience as of the desire, or rather the will (*θέλησις*), to render it. The translation in

the Revised Version is, "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching". The knowledge of Christ's doctrine as divine, from God, is to follow as a consequence of the sincere and steadfast purpose to do the right, the will of God, so far as it is known. The promise of certitude, it will be observed, is not attached here to the actual doing of God's will, and still less to the doing of it under forms which have not yet been recognised as integral parts of that will. It is attached simply to a right bent of the human will. The statement has been understood to signify (Augustine, Luther) he who will obey God by believing on Me will soon learn, through his own experience, that he was right in so doing. This, however true, is not the truth here. The will of God must be used in this connection in a much more general sense—a sense in which the *contents* of that will are to a great extent unknown. And that which is demanded, and to which the assurance of ultimate knowledge of the Gospel as Divine and of Christ as commissioned to reveal the mind of God, is sympathy with the will of God as known and a sincere and earnest purpose to do it. Thus faith in Himself is not, according to Christ, the result of a purely intellectual process, it is not the conclusion of a logical argument, it is the result of a right state of mind Godward, it is the conclusion to which the soul is step by step conducted, which addresses itself seriously and humbly to the fulfilment of unquestioned moral duties. We cannot wonder that the right moral bent should be made the condition of spiritual insight and spiritual certitude in the case of weak, fallen men. What may well surprise us is, that the Saviour grounds His own claim to be heard on the same principle: "My judgment is just, because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (John v. 30,

R.V.). Thus the infallibility even of His spiritual discernment, the absolute certainty of His decisions in truth and duty, is by Him made to rest, negatively on the absence of all self-will or self-regard, positively on His supreme devotion to the will of God. A most instructive statement surely, and one not without its warning note for us.

2. Spiritual upbuilding. The saying of Christ (John iv. 34) to which attention has already been called comes in here : "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work". The words, it is true, were spoken in response to the invitation of the disciples, "Master, eat". It is possible, therefore, to regard the Saviour as simply taking up the word which they gave Him without regard to its proper distinctive meaning. But thus to view it is almost certainly to empty it of its significance. Therefore, when the Saviour says, "I have meat to eat ye know not of," we must regard Him as having reference to that which in some way serves the purposes of food, "meat," but meat of which they did not know the virtue. Meat is that which ministers satisfaction to natural desires and requirements, which repairs the waste of nature, and reinvigorates the person ; and this word of Christ, therefore, will say, not simply that to do the will of God is His constant task, as if *ἐργον*, but that it is His nutriment, *βρῶμα* ; in doing it, He finds spiritual satisfaction and reinvigoration. It is not necessary even to keep strictly by this word, spiritual. From the intimate connection subsisting between the material and the spiritual in man, that which reinvigorates the soul, reacts healthfully on the body. Doing the will of God in the work which He appoints us, when the heart is in it, is a refreshment to the entire nature. In any event, obedience to God is added strength. We

gain spiritual power, as we lose our wills in the will of God.

3. Gracious recognition by Christ, and participation in His blessedness. One of the most striking sayings here is, "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt. xii. 50). All the terms expressive of the closest and most endearing natural relationships are thus employed by Christ to designate the relation to Himself in which He regards those as standing who do the will of God, His Father. The statement is thus in advance of another, with which it may be compared: "Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John xv. 14). The "brother," "sister," "mother" is still more than the friend, and that which forms the close and indissoluble bond, is not the homage which they pay immediately to Himself, but that which they render to the will of His Father. Human life has no relationship too close, no affection too sacred, to shadow forth the relationship into which He, the Son of the Highest, takes those who do His Father's will, the love He feels for them. The saying is one which puts signal glory on the standing of the humblest person within whose heart reverence for the will of God is enshrined, but which, while doing this, hears at the same time most impressive testimony to the place which that will had in the mind and heart of Christ. Here there is the absolute self-forgetfulness, the utter loss of Himself in God, which is the unique glory of Jesus Christ.

Under this head may be quoted also the words of Christ after the feet-washing with its lesson: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John xiii. 17). Here too it is obedience, knowledge translated into action, on

which the Saviour pronounces His benediction. The word is not "happy" but "blessed" (*μακάριοι*) and what is designated by it, is not merely the inward satisfaction which ultimately results from every act of self-abusing love, but the actual devotion in dignity and character which accrues therefrom. "We are greater in God's eye and nearer to Him in proportion as we humble ourselves to serve our brethren" (Godet).

4. Obedience to God's will is unconditionally due; and the reward, whatever its nature, is wholly of grace. This would seem to be the meaning when He said, "Even so ye also, when ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do" (Luke xvii. 10, R.V.). What meets us in this word of Christ, is the absolute nature of the service which is due from man to God, leaving no room for works of supererogation, or claims of human merit. He belongs to God, with all his powers as the slave belongs to his master, or rather, as no man can or should belong to his fellow. It seems to be directed against the Pharisaical spirit which is confined to no age or people, and which can so easily lead a man to think his obedience gives him claims on God—puts God somehow in his debt. The true obedience to God, the obedience which is rendered in love, will not so think, at least ought not so to think. At the same time, while this word of Christ sets forth the estimate which every man should take of his work, when he himself values it in the presence of God, it is not inconsistent with the loving appreciation by God, and generous rewarding of even humble acts of service such as is taught in more than one passage in the gospels (Luke xii. 43, 44; John xiv. 21).

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Taken altogether, the teaching of Christ respecting obedience is most instructive. In its light we are made to see that the Christian ideal for man is not so much free and harmonious development of his powers, as the use of these powers in the service of God, the subjection of his whole being and activity to the will of God.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE SUPREMACY OF THE INWARD AND SPIRITUAL.

THE tendency to substitute ceremonial observances for obedience to moral requirements is one which has its root deep in our fallen nature, and which is therefore forthcoming in every age. The dispensation under which God was pleased to place the Jewish people for a time, with its elaborate and detailed ritual, may have, among other and better results which it was designed to serve, even contributed to strengthen this tendency. In any case, we see it fully operative in the days of the Saviour. The Pharisees were thence a numerous and influential body, and their piety was very largely of the outward kind. Accordingly, following in the line of the prophets, but going still deeper into the matter than they, it formed no unimportant part of Christ's ministry, so far as teaching was concerned, to protest against the undue importance attached to external rites, and to emphasise the permanent importance of the moral and the spiritual. We are now to observe the various connections in which this was done.

1. There is the presentation of love to God and to man as the essence of all morality. To the lawyer who inquired of Him, Which is the great commandment of the law? Jesus replied: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"

(Matt. xxii. 37-39; Mark xii. 28-31; Luke x. 27). The statement is not a new or original one on Christ's lips. It is found, the first part in Deuteronomy vi. 5, and the second in Leviticus xix. 18. What the Saviour does is to single the requirement out from the multitude of others found in the Old Testament Scriptures, and at once to set on it the stamp of His authority, and to place it in its position of supreme importance. The statement in the first part of it is all the more deserving of our attention that—what in one point of view is remarkable—the Saviour does not often in His teachings make direct and explicit reference to love to God as part of the Divine requirement. It is no doubt implied in that fatherly character in which God is everywhere presented, and it must ever be regarded as an essential element in the childlike trust Godward which is constantly inculcated. But it is the duty of trust, confiding, fearless trust in God, rather than of love to Him which He is wont to enforce. Here, however, in His reply to the question of the scribe, love comes to its rightful place. By this great word, preserved with inconsiderable variations in all the three synoptical gospels, the Saviour does not so much place supreme love to God and to man at the head of all duty, as He identifies all duty with it. It embraces or sums up all that is required of us. "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. xxii. 40). It should not be necessary in this connection to give a minute exposition of the profoundly significant saying. The love to God which is required is to be "with the whole heart," that is, with the whole rational and volitional nature; and "with the whole mind" (*διὰ πᾶν τὸ νοῦν*), that is, with the whole intelligence. Mark and Luke add, "And with all thy strength," that is, with all the energy and intensity



of our being. The love to our neighbour is to be such as we show to ourselves, not supreme therefore, but sincere and self-sacrificing. What, in addition, is pre-eminently important in this statement is the testimony which it bears to the inseparable conjunction of religion and morals in the Divine requirement. Even supreme love to God, if we could conceive of it as existing alone, is not complete without love to our neighbour, and love to our neighbour, even of the most self-forgetting kind, is still less complete without love to God. Both are requisite. Each indeed is the test of the other. Our love to God is seen to be sincere if it is accompanied by love to man. Our love to man is seen to be of the right kind when it is accompanied by love to God. What, however, has to be specially noted in the present connection is that inward and essentially moral principle—love—love to God and to our neighbour, is placed at the head of all obligation, is made to include all duty. "To love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices" (Mark xii. 33). By this ceremonialism is at once relegated to its place of comparative unimportance.


The strong commendation expressed by the Saviour on an occasion where this love was displayed towards Himself, as in the case of the woman who anointed Him in the house of Simon, if not coming exactly under the same head as the above, is at least not far removed from it. Her love, indeed, may be said to have combined both parts of the Divine requirements. Directed towards Christ, the Son of God, and the soon-to-be sufferer of Calvary, it was at once love to God and to man. The act to which it prompted was

apparently an insignificant one. In the eyes of the disciples, or at least of one of them, it was a useless waste of means, but in Christ's it was the very reverse: "She hath wrought a good work upon Me," and he promised to it immortality, "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her" (Matt. xxvi. 11, 13).

2. There is the high place which the Saviour gives to inward purity (Matt. v. 8), to poverty of spirit (Matt. v. 3), to humility (Matt. xviii. 4), and, speaking generally, to all those graces whose proper seat is the heart. The tendency in other religious systems has been to exalt doing, action. While Christianity is not chargeable with overlooking this, indeed emphasises it in its place (Matt. vii. 21), it attaches an importance nowhere else exhibited to the more passive virtues, such as humility and meekness, virtues which affect the outward life, indeed, but of which the heart is the true throne.

3. The Saviour proclaims the absolute indifference, in a moral point of view, of ceremonial requirements laid down by the Levitical law; requirements to which tradition had attached an importance that led to the neglect of moral duties, and He condemns the attempt to substitute the observance of the one for that of the other. The reproach directed against His disciples, because they ate with unwashen hands (Mark vii. 1), furnished the occasion for the declaration of this momentous principle, and with a breadth that carried it far beyond the particular requirement which was said to be violated: "Hearken unto Me every one of you, and understand; there is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him; but the things which

come out of him, those are they that defile the man" (Mark vii. 14, 15). And then, having entered into the house, He further opened up this truth, saying to the disciples: "Perceive ye not, that whatsoever from without goeth into the man, it cannot defile him; because it goeth not into his heart, but into his belly, and goeth out into the draught? This He said, making all meats clean. And He said, That which proceedeth out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetings, wickednesses, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, railing, pride, foolishness; all these evil things proceed from within, and defile the man" (Mark vii. 18-23, R.V.; and so Matt. xv. 17-20). In the latter passage the whole statement is closed with the words: "but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not the man". The far-reaching principle is here enunciated that the heart is the true seat, the exclusive one, of all in man that is morally praiseworthy, or that is the reverse; of all that affixes to the life the stamp of holiness on the one hand, or the stain of defilement on the other. The food which is partaken of becomes incorporated in a temporary way with the body, with that which is "the external, and in God's sight not essential, part of man's being". If it may become in some instances the occasion of sin, this must be regarded as due entirely to the evil disposition within the man. On the other hand, that which comes out of the man, as, for example, in foul speech, in wanton or envious look, in covetous desire, that does defile in God's eye, because it is the heart, the inward, the enduring part, the real man, which shapes it and gives it birth, and because by its character it testifies to the state of that heart.



The question may be asked, whether any importance is to be attached to the "proceeding out of the man," as distinguished from the presence in him of what is evil, beyond that of attesting the character of that which is within. This may well be. The defilement, if not first there, is surely intensified when the latent disposition to evil is actualised in the definite purpose, the cherished thought, the articulate word, the completed deed. There is a truth, here, to which the Saviour may well have had reference; *viz.*, that the sin, which the evil heart pours out, so far from relieving its foulness, does but make it more foul; not only shows the man to be unclean, but defiles him.

The Saviour, it will be observed, does not simply affirm the exclusive importance, ethically viewed, of that which proceeds out of the heart; He contrasts it with those external purifications to which not simply tradition, but the Levitical law itself, had attached large, if also temporary importance. "These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man." The truth thus stated seems so much a matter of course, that it is difficult to realise that men should ever have judged otherwise, have attached religious importance to external washings or any rites of the same order. We owe our clear discernment of it largely to the Saviour's teachings, and let it be said, we are not yet past the need of them. The human heart is still ready to substitute the ceremonial and the ritual for the strictly moral; not now, indeed, washing of hands, but observances of sacraments, church attendance, prayers, for obedience to moral precepts, or for the love of God and our neighbour.

It is this ever-reappearing tendency to substitute the

ritual for the moral which the Saviour condemns, when He says: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin," that is, ye pay tithes not only of the large and more valuable productions of the field and the vineyard, but even of articles of comparatively trifling value, "and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith," or in Luke, "judgment, and the love of God" (Matt. xxiii. 23; Luke xi. 42; comp. Mic. vi. 6-8). The Saviour's words, it will be readily understood, were not designed to be an absolute condemnation of the extension of the tithing, which the law required, to these minor articles (He says, indeed, these things ye ought not to have left undone); but to denounce as hypocritical and immoral the substitution of them for the weightier matters of the law, "judgment," that is, justice as between man and man, though Meyer, following Bengel, makes it the act of distinguishing between right and wrong; "mercy" to the needy and the suffering; and "faith," by which we are almost certainly to understand the right attitude of the soul Godward; not very different, therefore, from what Luke has in the corresponding passage, "the love of God". The lesson is for all time. The same tendency, not only to merge greater duties in less, but to replace obedience to moral requirements by external and ritual observances is still operative. In His eye who knows what is in man, and who sees into the very heart of human conduct, this is hypocrisy, acting a part and a very bad part. The stamp of highest condemnation is put, when He says: "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke xvi. 15).

The same truth, the superior and intrinsic value of the

inward and the spiritual, is set forth in a very striking manner in another statement: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also" (Matt. xxiii. 25, 26). The meaning of the metaphor is obvious. The cleanness of the vessel used for purposes of food depends much more on what it is within, than on what it is without. The foul interior makes the careful cleansing of the outward part a foolish mockery. The Pharisees were chargeable with this folly. The wrongful means employed to secure the contents of the cup, the immoderation shown in their use, this extortion and excess, was the real uncleanness, and while it remained, it made all external cleansing a useless farce. The lesson is still the same. The whole significance of the act in the sight of God depends not on its outward propriety, not even on what may be termed its inward content, save as that takes its character from the disposition of the man. The heart which fills it makes the cup foul or clean according to its own nature.

4. The supreme importance of the inward and moral is brought out in still another connection by Christ. It is set in contrast not only with the observance of rites and ceremonies, but with achievements even of the miraculous kind, and, therefore, *a fortiori* with those within the reach of man's natural powers—thus, "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that

work iniquity" (Matt. vii. 22, 23). The "prophesying" here as elsewhere is not necessarily "predicting," but proclaiming spiritual truth with a certain divine, or apparently divine afflatus; speaking or professing to speak under special inspiration and in Christ's name. The other claim is that of having wrought miracles (*δυνάμεις*), acts of supernatural power, and among others, "the casting out of devils," also in Christ's name, that is, as the power through which they performed them. It is not said whether this claim was a valid one or not. Admittedly there are difficulties connected with its admission. The power of miracles to attest the worker as from God would seem to be greatly weakened if it is one which can be exercised by evil men. The possibility, however, is one which seems to be contemplated in more than one passage of Scripture. It will be noticed that there is no denial by Christ of the truth of their allegation, such as it must have been easy to make, if it were groundless, and whatever the fact of the case, the significance of the Saviour's words is not weakened, but on the contrary it is greatly strengthened, on the supposition that those spoken of had really prophesied and cast out devils, and done many wonderful works in His name. For even to such Christ will say in that day, the day when the exact truth as opposed to all false colouring shall be openly proclaimed, "I never knew you," that is, in the sense in which it is said (John x. 14), "I know My sheep". As one has said, "What they claimed—intimacy with Christ—is just what He repudiates and with a certain scornful dignity. Our acquaintance was never broken off; there never was any" (Brown). The words which close the solemn and indeed awful declaration disclose the fundamental disqualification in this case: "Depart from Me, ye that work

iniquity". No achievement, even though wrought professedly in His name and in the interests of His kingdom, is of any avail so far as the worker is concerned, except to aggravate condemnation, where the moral life is corrupt and wicked. Such can only come before Christ to hear the awful word, "depart from Me"; not to be changed by any "Lord, Lord," which may be uttered in accents of despairing entreaty. Most solemn warning, and who shall say by how many needed!

But it is only a part of the truth here, that high achievement, acts, if possible, of even supernatural power, are of no account in averting condemnation in the case of those whose life is wicked; it has to be added that in the case of true disciples even, such acts are relegated by Christ into a position of quite subordinate importance. When the disciples, sent forth with a commission to preach and with power to heal, returned to their Master, exclaiming with a childlike outburst of surprise and gladness, "Even the devils are subject unto us through Thy name," His reply was, "Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Luke x. 20). The subjection of the spirits unto them was in effect the possession and the exercise of a rare degree of power. The names written in heaven meant on the other hand the attainment of heavenly character. The antithesis which it is so easy to miss is really between the exercise of controlling power and the possession of goodness; between a name on earth for conspicuous achievement, and a name in heaven for the qualities which are esteemed there. The distinction to which the Saviour points them is not exactly that they are among the number of the saved, that come what may they



are sure of heaven at last, a very real but yet not a very high satisfaction. It is rather that they have the disposition, the character of the saved, or of those who are citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. This, He will say, is the true ground of joy. To be a humble, pure-minded, unselfish disciple, a true child of the kingdom is an infinitely higher thing than to perform works, whether supernatural or simply natural, which become the talk of the world and lift the worker into fame. How could the Saviour more strongly assert the supremacy of the inward and the spiritual !

Thus, by the presentation of love to God and our neighbour as the sum of the Divine requirement ; by the prominent place which He gives to humility, meekness and the kindred graces ; by the oft-reiterated proclamation of the indifference of the merely ritual and ceremonial ; by its emphatic condemnation even when offered as a substitute for the moral, and by the unquestionable superiority which He gives to moral excellence over all achievements, even when these rise to the miraculous, the Saviour has for ever placed the supremacy of the inward and spiritual beyond question.



## CHAPTER XXII.

### CHRISTIAN GREATNESS.

THIS subject is obviously very closely connected with the preceding one, and may be discussed still more briefly. The point to be considered is, What is greatness in Christ's eye? What is the Christian conception of greatness? in what does it consist?

1. It consists (*a*) in humility. "Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. xviii. 4). The statement is made, according to Matthew, in reply to a question of the disciples: "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" The incident is detailed, but with considerable variation in all the three synoptical gospels: variation so great, not only in the circumstances which led up to the teaching, but in the teaching itself, that one is almost compelled to posit two distinct occasions on which the instruction was given. According to Mark, it is Jesus Himself who takes the initiative and who questions them as to their dispute by the way. At first, as if stricken with shame, they were silent. Either they afterwards confessed that they had been contending as to their respective places of importance, or Christ showed His knowledge of the fact. According to Matthew ("contrary to all moral probability"—Godet), the question was put by one of themselves: "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" So much for the occasion. The reply of Christ is: "Whosoever therefore shall humble

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himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven". The little child (*παιδίον*) is weak, and conscious of its weakness. It is dependent, and knows it. That this, and not the innocence or the affectionateness of the child, is the point of comparison is evident from the word (*ταπεινώση*), humble himself. The disposition which the Saviour thus singles out for commendation, and identifies so far with *greatness*, is that of humility—the opposite of the proud, self-asserting temper. He will say, that as the man enters His kingdom in a lowly spirit, the spirit of self-renunciation, so he rises in it; he attains to greatness before God, that is, true greatness, as he cultivates his spirit. This is not inconsistent with a proper self-respect. Vinet's definition of the Christian is, a man "erect before men, on his knees before God". Ambition, the desire to be first, what Shakespeare calls "the last infirmity of noble minds," would seem to be fatal to Christian greatness. The self-exalting spirit is the very opposite of that which Christ commends, and makes a prerequisite to greatness. Accordingly He says: "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all" (Mark ix. 35).

(*b*) In readiness to serve, or rather, actual service of others. "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them; but it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 25-28). The second element in greatness, in the Christian sense, is thus readiness to serve others; readiness to put one's powers at the service

of their fellowmen, for the promotion of their temporal or their spiritual well-being. It is contrasted by Christ Himself with the worldly conception of greatness, which is that of commanding service from others rather than that of rendering service to them. In the worldly sense he is great who commands, and in the degree in which he commands. In the Christian sense, he is great who serves—serves, indeed, not because he must, but because he will. Everything here depends on this—the motive. To be “servant of all” is even the penalty with which Christ threatens the man who desires to be first. In that case, the service is of the unwilling kind. Of such it will be readily understood the Saviour is not speaking here. It is of service constrained by love. And through this service lies the road to greatness. The remark of Alford is surely wrong here. He says: “If any man will be great, will be first, that is, in the next life, let him be servant (*διάκονος, δούλος*) here. He who has grace to love, to serve his fellowmen; to stoop even to lowliest and most self-sacrificing acts of service does not wait for greatness to another life—he is great. He would be great even though there were no other life.”

This is the Christian conception of greatness—and notice, Christ presents Himself expressly as a type and pattern of this element of greatness: “Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many”. This is His true greatness—that He stoops so far—gives up all, even to life itself, for men, for those whose chief, if not whose only, claim on Him was their sin and their sore need. I am not sure that we can say He presents Himself in the same way as a pattern of humility. He does, indeed, speak of Himself

as meek and lowly of heart. But there the main idea seems to be submissiveness of will; unrepining acceptance of the Divine appointment. Humility in the sense of a lowly estimate of His own power and goodness, in the sense in which a little child is a pattern of it, could scarcely be a characteristic of Him who carried in His breast the consciousness of oneness with God. Accordingly He presents a little child as a pattern of the greatness which consists in humility; Himself as an example of the greatness which consists in the service of others. The two are found together when He said: "But He that is greatest among you shall be your servant, and whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Matt. xxiii. 11-12). It is scarcely necessary to add, that while to serve others is to be great; to serve others most is to be greatest; while this is the result, it can never be the end. That is no true humility, but the mere pretence of it, which stoops with a view to subsequent exaltation. That is no true service of others which has its eye fixed all the time on the honours with which it is to be crowned; though just here is one of the difficulties which beset us when we endeavour to walk in the Christian path. The world is apt to assert itself, only in a more subtile form.

2. We are now in a position to understand the meaning of a word of Christ respecting John the Baptist, which is not without its difficulty: "Verily, I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he" (Matt. xi. 11). It is unnecessary to adopt the ingenious solution of Chrysostom, according to which the person spoken of as the

less or the least is Christ Himself, thus, "I, Jesus, who as yet am less than John in public esteem, am greater than he in the Kingdom of Heaven". This explanation is ruled out by this consideration alone, not to mention others, that Christ does not speak of Himself as in the kingdom, as one of its members, even the highest. It is in Him rather than He in it. Taking the first part of the statement, "Among those born of women, there is not, there hath not been, a greater than John the Baptist"; the reference must not be to his personal worth, but to his position and work in relation to the Messiah; specially that he was called of God to be His forerunner—to herald the establishment of the new kingdom. It can scarcely be Christ's meaning, to say that John was personally and in respect of moral character higher than Abraham, Moses, Elijah and others, but his mission was higher than theirs, because of the immediate connection in which it stood to that of Christ Himself: "And, nevertheless, Jesus adds, the ancient order of things and the new are separated by such a gulf, that the least in the latter has a higher position than John himself" (Godet). Here too the reference must be not to personal worth, but to privilege and standing. One could not say with any appearance of truth, that the humblest Christian, the weakest and least consistent, was in moral qualities the superior of the Baptist. What Christ will say is, that he stands on a higher plane, that he belongs to an economy established on higher principles—one animated by more spiritual motives—not that he is more faithful than John: "This saying shows how fully conscious Jesus was of introducing a principle of life superior to the most exalted element of Judaism" (Godet). Dr. Bruce in his work *The Kingdom of God*, finds the explanation of the statement in the

consideration that "John was in tendency and temper a destroyer, not indeed with reference to Mosaic institutions, but with reference to the actual religious life of his time. The chosen symbols with him were the axe laid at the root of the tree, and the fan separating the chaff from the wheat, with a view to its being burnt up in unquenchable fire. Yet John is a one-sided, a defective man. Strong in zeal, he is weak in love. Strong in denunciation of evil, he is weak in patience towards the sinful. In these respects any one in the Kingdom of Heaven, animated by its characteristic spirit of love and patient hope, is greater than he."

Here also belongs another saying of Christ (the only other one embraced under this head), "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. v. 19). It will be noted that the word translated "break" is not that used to denote transgression, but "rendering invalid" (*λύση*), literally "dissolve". Accordingly what is meant probably is, not the practical breaking or disobeying of the law, but "the annulling or enervating its obligation by a vicious system of interpretation, and teaching others to do the same," and what the Saviour affirmed of such is, not that they shall be excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven, but that they shall be called least in it, but whosoever shall do and teach them, whose soever acts and teaching shall go to establish and exalt the authority and the honour of God's law in its lowest as well as in its highest requirements, shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### HUMAN BLESSEDNESS.

THE Saviour's teaching regarding greatness is scarcely more distinctive than is His teaching regarding blessedness. Indeed, the one is almost the natural outcome of the other. One may almost say that the one is the other, differently viewed. Still they are quite distinguishable in thought, even if inseparable in fact.

It is necessary first of all to direct attention to the term. That term is not gladness, not pleasure and happiness, it is blessedness (*μακάριοι*). The terms are not identical. Mere outward success, high health, prosperous business, grateful surroundings, are enough to produce pleasure, happiness, at least while they last, but blessedness, never. That, on the other hand, can exist in the midst of discouragement, sorrow, and loss. Now it is of this which Christ speaks. It is, if not a distinctively Christian idea, a distinctively religious one.

1. It is defined negatively. (a) It does not consist in the exercise of power, whether intellectual or physical, whether supernatural or natural. That is the deep significance of the word : " Rejoice not, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven " (Luke x. 20). Mere power is not blessedness, everything depends on the use made of it.

(b) It does not consist in outward possessions. " A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he



possesseth" (Luke xii. 15). The statement immediately follows a warning against covetousness (*πλεονεξία*), the desire after more of outward goods, and the warning is enforced by this consideration. The term life is obviously used here in the high and pregnant sense; it is certainly not in that of the body simply; it is far more that of the soul. It is not existence simply, however prolonged; it is blessedness. And the Saviour testifies emphatically that this is not of His abundance (*περισσεύειν*), that which is over and above what the man requires. This can do nothing to support life in the high and blessed sense of the term. Still less does life consist in it. Further light is thrown on the passage by the Saviour's words, when, after having exposed the folly of the rich man in the parable, he adds, "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God" (Luke xii. 21). What we are warned against is selfish accumulation; the antithesis being "rich towards God" (*εἰς Θεὸν πλουτῶν*). This has sometimes been supposed to mean rich in spiritual goods, in the attainments which constitute as it were soul-wealth. The expression, however, does not seem to designate this exactly. It is properly rich in relation to God, that is, rich in the sense of having a treasure in Him. The two opposite poles are "self" and "God," as presented in this statement. To hoard for self, and the same will apply to selfish spending, is to become impoverished towards God, and so to forfeit blessedness, for, as everywhere implied, this, as distinguishable from mere happiness, rests on God, is enjoyed in fellowship with Him.

2. It is defined positively as consisting (*a*) in the possession of the Kingdom of Heaven, or, the right to it, grounded on or coming through "poverty of spirit"; not literal

poverty, physical destitution, but "poverty of spirit," that is, consciousness of a dependent and sinful condition (Matt. v. iii.). The state designated is undoubtedly an ethical one. It lies very near to humility, from which it is with difficulty distinguished. Blessedness is defined, if not as consisting in it, yet at least as consisting in that to which it conducts—of which it is the pledge, if not, indeed, the essence—"the Kingdom of Heaven".

(b) In the comfort which comes through sorrow; not sorrow for sin only, but all sorrow which is taken to God, or perhaps better, which takes us to God. The word is, "Blessed are they that mourn," not because they mourn, but "for they shall be comforted" (Matt. v. 4). The statement has been interpreted as having special reference to the happiness which should come, to those who mourn, as a result of the establishment of the Messianic kingdom, and through their enjoyment of its blessings. But it is of a more general kind; indeed, it is quite universal.

(c) In the prospect of the inheritance of the earth or the land, which is destined for "the meek"; those who can bear reproach and wrong without resentment and revenge. The word seems to point to a time when power and possessions should come into the hands, not of rude, self-asserting strength, but of gentle long-suffering meekness (Matt. v. 5).

(d) In the satisfaction which should come to the soul "hungering and thirsting after righteousness," that is, at once sensible that it does not possess righteousness, and intent on obtaining it. One may say that this hunger, this thirst, is itself more blessed than the actual attainment of anything else or less; but it is rather the certain satisfaction which it shall ultimately obtain, on which the Saviour concentrates attention, than on the desire itself, noble though

that is. The blessedness lies in this, that, however other desires, hungers, may be frustrated, this one shall not, if persistently cherished, fail of satisfaction.

(e) In the assurance of mercy from God for themselves which those may entertain who exercise it towards others : "Blessed are the merciful" (Matt. v. 7), embracing every degree and form of mutual sympathy and help ; tender consideration for human weakness, and readiness to forgive personal offences. The mercy which they exercise shall be returned to them in His kingdom : "They shall obtain mercy". Here, again, one would have to say, that the disposition itself is blessed, even apart from the resultant blessing of which it is the pledge.

(f) In the vision of God, which is promised to the "pure in heart" (Matt. v. 8). The vision of God here spoken of has been differently apprehended. By some it has been regarded as equivalent to knowledge of God, of a direct and immediate kind, such knowledge as in respect to certainty and clearness may be compared to sight or to that which is obtained through sight ; the heart's vision of Him, with whom it has direct communion. This is the view of Tholuck, De Wette and others. The term "see" is clearly used in this sense in the passage, "Whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him" (1 John iii. 6). By others, as Meyer, it is regarded as the actual vision of God in the glorified body. Any objection founded on such passages as Exodus xxxiii. 20 ; John i. 18 ; vi. 46 ; 1 Timothy vi. 16, are not regarded as inconsistent with this view, as in these the reference is to the seeing of God with the earthly eye, and any other view is spoken of as the result of a rationalising process. The preponderating opinion nevertheless is that which makes it refer to soul-vision, that is,

inner spiritual knowledge, of which purity of heart, a heart wholly single and set free from the defilement of sin, makes the individual capable.

(g) In evidence of true worship or likeness to God which comes out in a peace-making disposition : "Blessed are the peace-makers : for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. v. 9), that is, they shall be recognised as the children of God, from their resemblance to Him, who is the great reconciler. The antithesis is not between "being called" and "being". There is no more antithesis here, any more than in 1 John iii. 1. The idea expressed is that, not only of "being sons of God," but being recognised as such ; and sonship is here employed to denote likeness. The Saviour will say, "To terminate enmities, estrangements, to make estranged ones friends is eminently Godlike and therefore blessed".

(h) In the assured possession of the kingdom, as the result of suffering for righteousness' sake, or for the sake of Christ Himself, who is the founder of the kingdom : "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake : for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. v. 10-12). The beatitude here differs from the preceding in that it does not so clearly rest upon character. It seems to rest rather upon what men endure than on what men are. The difference is more seeming than real. It is persecution for righteousness' sake, it is evil speaking against *falsely*, on which the beatitude proceeds. Thus human blessedness, so far as it has been unfolded in these words, is the blessedness which belongs to inward character, as distinguished from external circumstance, or which grows directly out of it.

A somewhat different view seems to be given by the account of the Sermon on the Mount, as we find it in Luke,

where the reading is "Blessed are ye poor"; "Blessed are ye that hunger now"; "Blessed are ye that weep now" (Luke vi. 20, 21). There it seems to be the state of poverty, of hunger, etc., that is pronounced blessed by Christ. They may well be not different versions of the same discourse, but independent versions of different discourses. It is not only conceivable, but even probable, that Christ spoke these great fundamental truths on different occasions. In any case, in Matthew we have the whole discourse of Christ, much as it was spoken. The version of Luke is much more fragmentary. Godet's view is different, *vis.*, that the discourse was one, and that the text of Luke is a more exact report of this discourse than Matthew's. The difference, however, is less than at first sight might appear. For notice, the words do not run in Luke, "Blessed are the poor, the hungry," etc., but "Blessed are *ye* poor, *ye* hungry," etc. Now, as Godet remarks, "Jesus when He spoke thus, was addressing particular concrete poor and afflicted, whom He already recognised as His disciples, as believers, and whom He regarded as the representatives of that new people which He was come to instal on the earth". Thus the spiritual qualification which is expressed in Matthew is really implied in Luke.

Passing from the Sermon on the Mount—human blessedness is still further defined as consisting in or at least resulting from the knowledge of the Christian verities: "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them" (Matt. xiii. 16-17). The point here is not that they have been in

circumstances to hear and see what pious men who lived in former generations had longed in vain to hear and to see, but, as is evident from the context, that they had spiritual discernment of the truth presented to ear and eye. Not the objective revelation simply, whether by word or fact, whether by what Jesus was or by what Jesus did, but the gracious susceptibility to receive it, is what the Saviour pronounces blessed. The very form of the expression seems designed to keep us right here: "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear".

3. Another word used to express the Christian idea of blessedness is "rest". "Come unto Me . . . and I will give you rest . . . learn of Me . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. xi. 28-29). It is true we have not the word "blessed" here, but the whole form of the expression implies that in this rest man's blessedness is secured. From the connection it would not seem to be mainly, certainly not exclusively, the rest of the accusing conscience in forgiveness, it is rather that of the submissive will; that which is enjoyed when all the insurrectionary powers of the soul have been schooled into submission, when the spirit has learned to bend in meek resignation to the will that is over us in life. That is blessedness according to the Christian idea—not stoical indifference, not apathy which is the destruction of the nature in some of its finer parts, but trustful and resolute submission, rooting in reverence for the will of God.

4. It is also spoken of as consisting in obedience to God's requirement: "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke xi. 28). The saying is found in a charming incident, mentioned by Luke alone. One hearing the Saviour, with true womanly feeling envies the

mother of a wonderful teacher, and says: "Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which Thou hast sucked". Jesus replied, "Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it"; not denying, indeed, the truth which the woman affirmed, but using it to set another and more important truth in a very striking light. It is the same truth which is expressed in the words, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John xiii. 17).

5. It is put in still another light: "Blessed is he who-soever shall not be offended in Me" (Matt. ix. 6). Here it is implied that there are grounds of offence in Christ, things, that is, on the ground of which a man may come to stand in doubt of His Divine mission, or even to reject Him. There were such in the Baptist's day, there are such in ours. There probably will always be. The faith which can hold on to Christ in spite of these is "blessed"; all the more blessed because of the obstacles over which it has triumphed. Not very dissimilar are the Lord's words to Thomas, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John xx. 29).

6. The blessedness of which Christ speaks, as we have seen, is mainly that of character, but it is not exclusively. There is also the blessedness of the final reward: "Thou shalt be blessed . . . for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just" (Luke xiv. 14); "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That He shall make him ruler over all His goods" (Matt. xxiv. 46, 47); "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching: verily I say unto you, That He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come

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forth and serve them " (Luke xii. 37). In other words, the blessedness of high honour and promotion under Christ and from Him shall come to crown appropriately the blessedness of such character as conforms the man to Him. Who can estimate the value of such teaching to the world?



## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE CHURCH AND ITS ORDINANCES, BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER.

THE first thing which will strike the thoughtful student of the Saviour's words touching the Church, is their small number, especially in view of the numberless questions which have been raised concerning it among His disciples. It seems impossible not to draw the inference, that the whole question of its organisation was a minor one in Christ's eye; that He was mainly solicitous respecting the true spirit in His followers, and this secured, would leave it immeasurably free to clothe itself in appropriate forms.

The first use of the word found in the New Testament is, "Upon this rock I will build My church" (Matt. xvi. 18). The term is *ἐκκλησία*, familiar as the Septuagint translation of *קָהָל*, congregation. It must be regarded as designating the believing followers of Christ as united for the purposes of worship and mutual edification, or the organised body which these form. The name *ἐκκλησία*, while borrowed from the Old Testament, is "appropriate, as denoting a new institution of an eclectic character, distinct both from the Jewish nation and from the synagogue, though familiar to all readers of the Septuagint, as a title applied to the people of Israel in its religious aspect as a chosen race in covenant with God". The term employed by Christ at an earlier period, and more frequently is, "the Kingdom of God," "the Kingdom of Heaven". It would seem


difficult to distinguish the two terms. They are practically identical. Or if the former, "the kingdom," may be regarded more as setting forth an idea, constituting an ideal, that of a reign of God on earth and among men, the latter may be regarded as the practical embodiment of that ideal—the institution in which the Kingdom of God was to take visible form among men. While admitting this, Dr. Bruce claims (with doubtful right) that the identity of Church and kingdom is only relative, not absolute; that the kingdom in the wider category, embracing not only those who have come to the knowledge of the historical Christ and been admitted by faith in His name into the fellowship of the Church, "but also many more, the children of the Father in every land, who have unconsciously loved Christ in the person of His representatives, the poor, the suffering, the sorrowful". The calling of the disciples, the choice and training of the Apostles, the institution of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, must all be regarded as pointing to the institution of a society which was to bear His name and perpetuate His truth in the world. In Christ's teachings we note :—

1.—THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH AS SET FORTH IN  
THE LORD'S WORDS TO PETER.

"I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My Church" (Matt. xvi. 18). We are here taught by the Saviour that the Church of Christ is to rise on Peter, as a foundation stone. The attempt to disconnect the statement from the Apostle, and to make it refer either to his confession, or to the Saviour Himself (the rock pointing to Himself), must be ruled out as forced and unnatural. But while the words must in all honesty be held as referring

to Peter, it is to Peter, as one who had made that great confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God," made it, if not before all others, yet with a strength of conviction and a clearness of intelligence in advance of anything which the Saviour had as yet experienced. We cannot wonder, in these circumstances, that the Saviour should present him as the first stone, in a sense the foundation stone, in the new building which He was rearing in the world.

Now in doing so He, at least by implication, teaches us that the Church was to be built up of persons of like character, that is, persons who believed on Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and who had received this faith as a revelation from heaven. In other words, the new society was to be Christian; composed of men confessing Christ's name, animated by His spirit, and receiving Him as the Son of God. All this is familiar to us now; so much so that it seems a mere truism to assert it, but it was not always so. In reality it was a most important statement, that the Church, the new society, was to find its *raison d'être* in Himself, in the confession of His name, in the worship of His person. This is implied, and it is the most important thing implied, in the declaration, "Upon this rock I will build My Church". There may be admittedly implied in it a certain priority or primacy accorded to Peter among the Apostles, such as is seen in the place he filled on the day of Pentecost, when the Lord made choice of him to preach the first gospel sermon to the Jews, and in the choice of him at a later period to open the door of the kingdom to the Gentiles. But there is in the passage not a vestige of ground for such a primacy as is claimed by the adherents of Rome, for, first, there is no evidence that the primacy



accorded to Peter was of the kind claimed by Romanists ; second, there is none that the Lord had any successors of Peter in His eye ; and third, there is none that the Bishops of Rome are such successors and heirs of Peter's prerogatives, whatever these were.

## II.—THE PREROGATIVES CONFERRED ON THE CHURCH.

1. To adjudicate in cases of alleged wrong. In the case of trespass by a brother, the final resort is to be to the Church, that is, after private dealing, or dealing with two or three witnesses has proved ineffectual : "Tell it unto the Church : but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican" (Matt. xviii. 17). The "Church" is obviously here not the Jewish synagogue, the words which follow in the next three verses could have no application to it ; neither are we to regard it as meaning directly the rulers of the Church ; it is the Church in its collective capacity, as composed of the body of the faithful. The presupposition is that in a body so constituted, with its clear knowledge, simple faith, pure aims, there would be the security for a righteous decision in the matter under dispute. If its decision is not accepted then the injured one is justified in ceasing to have further fellowship with the trespasser. It is not a question of excommunication—whether the less or the greater. That is scarcely under discussion, unless, indeed, indirectly. It is simply, have nothing further to do with him as a brother in Christ, "let him be to you as an heathen man and a publican".

2. To enact touching ordinances for government of conduct. Closely connected with this is the power of "loosing

and binding," as that was conveyed first to Peter and afterwards to all the Apostles, or rather, as a careful exegesis will show, to the whole body of which they were the appointed leaders: "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. xvi. 19). The reference is neither to the making men whole and the making of them sick, nor to the admission to the membership of the Church and the exclusion from it (Lange), not even to the remission and retention of sin (the view of Erasmus, Beza and Calvin), but to the permission and prohibition of courses of action, to the enactment of ordinances or statutes for human guidance. Meyer's paraphrase is, "On thy decision, which shall be ratified by God, shall it depend what as forbidden shall render men incapable of entrance into the kingdom of the Lord, and what as permitted shall not hinder their reception thereunto". On this view the reference is to the power of legislation conferred by Christ on Peter first, and then on all the Apostles, or rather on the Church of which they were the heads; a power, not of an arbitrary kind, but possessed and to be exercised in intimate connection with the Holy Spirit resident within them. It is useless to deny that in so speaking to Peter the Lord did grant to him a certain precedence; the basis for it being found partly in his natural abilities and partly in his decisive recognition before the others of the Divine Sonship of Jesus Christ. The Romish inference from this is, as we have seen, wholly illicit. The same assurance is made to the Apostles as a body (Matt. xviii. 18), or rather, as a careful consideration of the context shows, to the Church at the head of which they stood.

The words, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven," precede, in the address to Peter, the promise of the power of "binding and loosing". There has been much diversity of opinion regarding the meaning of these words. The most common view regards the reference to be to the power of admitting to, or excluding from, the Kingdom of God about to be set up; the power, that is, of determining whether a person should come into it or not—such as was exercised by Peter in an especial and pre-eminent manner, when at Pentecost he opened the kingdom to the Jews, and in the house of Cornelius he opened it to the Gentiles, and when he, on another occasion (Acts viii. 21), shut it on Simon Magus. It would almost seem certain that the two clauses of the verse are to be read closely together, and that the keys of the kingdom designate simply the power, in the exercise of which the Apostle first, and the Church after him, should open and shut, or rather should bind and loose in the sense already explained. The words spoken concerning Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder: so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open" (Isaiah xxii. 22), may be referred to in proof of the view that the keys are simply the emblem of official authority or power. Dr. Bruce has taken a different view of this passage. He says, "His (Christ's) purpose was not to determine with whom lay the power authoritatively to admit or exclude from the Church, assumed to be identical with the Kingdom of God, but rather to indicate the connection between the Church and the kingdom, and the conditions under which the one might be identified with the other. In promising to Peter the keys of the kingdom, He meant to say that a society of

men cordially joining in His confession, calling Jesus Lord by the Holy Ghost, was the ideal of the kingdom realised."

3. To declare authoritatively the forgiveness of sin. The text here is, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them ; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained" (John xx. 23). The prerogative here is a different, though no doubt cognate, one to that already discussed. These three points require to be noted. The power is that of absolving from sin or retaining under condemnation. Of course the absolution and retention can only be declarative. The prerogative of the bestowal of forgiveness belongs to God alone—but while declarative and not communicative, it is at the same time authoritative. This is the very point of the statement, "Whose soever sins ye remit they *are* remitted". The declaration does not remain void of effect. Being the echo of the mind of God it is fulfilled in fact. Second, this power, whatever its scope, is granted to the Church as an organised body, not to the Apostles simply, but to them at most as organs of the Church. It is not a prerogative bestowed on, and limited to, a select body of believers, to be by them conveyed to others like some secret charm. There is no trace in the New Testament of any such conveyance. It is a prerogative bestowed on the body of the faithful as such. This is the view even of Episcopalians like Alford and Westcott. And third, this power or prerogative belongs to the Church as possessed of the Holy Ghost. The connection of the words which precede must not be overlooked. He "saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost : Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them ; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained". This connection would seem to teach that it is as having received the Holy Ghost,

and with Him the true knowledge of sin and righteousness and judgment, that the Church is gifted with the prerogative of absolving or retaining sin. This point seems to be overlooked by F. W. Robertson in a remarkable sermon on the subject, from the text, "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sin," where the doctrine taught is, that the power of absolution spoken of here is one which belongs to man simply as man, and to Christ, not as Divine, but as human, as the Son of Man.

4. The assurance of Christ's presence. It remains only to mention under this head the assurance of the Saviour's presence: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 20). The presence must be regarded as at once real and gracious; and, what is very important as over against the tendency to a narrow ecclesiasticalism which is ever re-asserting itself, it is made in terms which render it independent of particular forms of government or ceremonies; terms, "two or three gathered together in my name," which render it unnecessary to raise the question whether the Church (*ἐκκλησία*) is a properly constituted one.

### III.—THE INDESTRUCTIBILITY GUARANTEED TO THE CHURCH.

This seems to be the most natural interpretation of the words: "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi. 18, R.V.). "The gates of Hades" is, according to Alford, "by a well-known Oriental form of speech, equivalent to the power of the kingdom of death." In the same way the Turkish Empire is known as "the Ottoman Porte". The meaning of the assurance would then be that over the Church of Christ, finding its foundation-stone in



that Apostle who had come to the clear recognition and distinct confession of His Divine Sonship, and to be built up of the like material, no adverse power should ever prevail so as to accomplish its extinction. Other opinions have been entertained respecting the force of the words, but on the whole the one given seems the preferable.

With the Church there is naturally suggested for consideration its ordinances, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Their institution is very closely connected with the establishment of the Church of Christ, marking it out as a distinct and divinely sanctioned society.

#### IV.—BAPTISM.

It is to be remarked that baptism had, as a religious rite, an existence before Christ. It seems to have been administered by the Jews to proselytes. It formed an important feature in the ministry of John, but as instituted by Christ it must be regarded as assuming a new character, even as it was administered in new terms. Attention has been called to the fact that there is no reference to it as an appointment of Christ, prior to His resurrection. His words respecting it come all of them from that period in the narrative. They will not have less authority with us on this account, though those who rule out the post-resurrection details as unhistorical have used the circumstance to claim that Christian baptism has no sanction in the teaching of Christ.

The following points will be noted as summarising the teachings of Christ respecting the rite:—

1. Its direct institution by Christ. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. xxviii. 19).

To those who hold the inspiration of the Scriptures, it will be of no account that the words come from the post-resurrection period. The sacrament comes to us with the full stamp of His authority, and cannot be regarded as less than the initiatory rite of admission to His Church, consummating the discipleship begun in teaching. Alford, indeed, makes the order exactly the reverse, saying: "The *μαθητευειν* consists of two parts—the initiatory admissory rite and the subsequent teaching". The words are consistent with either view. It is not to be overlooked that the word in the first clause translated "teach" is "disciple".

2. Its significance. This is contained in the words: "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost". The "name" here, as elsewhere, denotes the being or nature as known, and as that in the subject designated, to which baptism is related. The preposition, moreover, is *εις*, not *εν*, "into"; and while we have Trinity of persons we have the singular "name". The significance of baptism as disclosed in these words of its institution would appear to be, that the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost is the object of the faith, and the content of the confession of the person submitting to the rite. In other places it implies his believing acknowledgment of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. It has been usual to regard the Saviour as giving in these words the terms in which the rite was to be administered, and not simply, or so much, its purport. This is rendered doubtful by the circumstance that there is scarcely any trace in the Apostolic Church of the use of this formula. The words there are, "baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts viii. 16; xix. 5); "baptised in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts x. 48, R.V.); "baptised into Jesus

Christ" (Rom. vi. 3); "baptised into Christ" (Gal. iii. 27).

3. It was to be the accompaniment of teaching, and to be indiscriminate or universal in its scope. Go and disciple all nations, baptising (*βαπτίζοντες*), teaching (*διδασκοντες*). The ordinance of baptism may either be regarded as the end to which the antecedent teaching leads, or the beginning, the initiatory rite, to be followed by teaching. Both views, as we have seen, may be taken. The order of the words would favour the latter, even as it is also more in harmony with what has come to be the prevailing practice in the Christian Church. In the case of adults, it is obvious some teaching must precede the administration of the rite, so much at least as to secure their submission to it. Nothing is said here, or can even be inferred with certainty, as to what is to be done in those cases where the age makes the person incapable of receiving teaching. The words, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me: for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven; and He laid His hands on them" (Matt. xix. 14, 15), are proof that the Saviour's interest is not limited to those of adult years, that it extends even to those who are being carried in the arms. It is true these words do not contain a direct proof in favour of infant baptism, but at least they furnish a conclusive answer to some of the objections, such as the incapacity of the child to receive benefit from the ordinance, which have been taken against it.

4. Its presupposition of faith, in all cases where that can be exercised. "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved" (Mark xvi. 16). No argument is needed to show that baptism into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost presupposes faith in the Father and the Son

and the Holy Ghost, where the subject of it is capable of exercising that faith. And the order of the Saviour's words confirms the truth. But they say nothing as to the relation to the rite of those who are incapable as yet of receiving instruction. This must be determined on other grounds altogether. It will not do, certainly, to say that the fair reading of the teaching of the New Testament is "no faith, no baptism," because on precisely similar ground it might be claimed that the fair reading of its teaching is "no faith, no salvation," a conclusion which our Baptist brethren would be the first to disallow.

Putting together the personal teachings of Christ on the subject, we are brought to these conclusions, that Christian baptism, the baptism with water, is His ordinance, that it is the initiatory rite of discipleship, that it is to be accompanied with teaching, and that it is the symbol of faith on and confession of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

#### V.—THE LORD'S SUPPER.

The other ordinance which the Saviour instituted before His death, and by which also a distinct character was given to His Church, was that of the Lord's Supper. The personal statements respecting it are not numerous, but they are very important. They teach :—

1. Its direct appointment by Christ. "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it: for this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi. 26-28). There is no need of enlarging on this point. It is plain beyond dispute. The nar-

rative bears on it undeniable marks of authenticity. We cannot conceive of invention, either of the conscious or unconscious kind, originating such an institution as the Lord's Supper, and in terms so startlingly perplexing.

2. Its character. First, Memorial: "This do in remembrance of Me" (Luke xxii. 19). Whatever more the ordinance is, or whether it is aught more, the words of Christ, at least, stamp it with this character. The followers of Christ are asked to commemorate in it their Divine Lord, to commemorate very specially His death: "Ye do show the Lord's death till He come" (1 Cor. xi. 26). Moreover, it is the memorial, not of His death simply, but of His death in its expiatory or atoning character: "This is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi. 28). This language is very important. By it the death of Christ is set in direct relation to our forgiveness. Its proper sacrificial character is embedded in the very words by which the ordinance was instituted, and which shall not fail to be used so long as there is a Church of Christ upon the earth. The question remains, Has it anything further than a commemorative character? Do the Saviour's words point to more? They do.

It is, second, participative in some respects. And He said, "Take, eat; this is My body," and so, "Drink ye all of it: for this is My blood". Admittedly it is difficult to express in definite terms in what the participation consists. Perhaps it was not meant to be made entirely definite. The grosser meaning adopted by the Roman Catholic Church to the Saviour's words is decisively ruled out by the fact that it is Christ Himself who is the speaker, and who standing before the disciples in bodily form says, "Take, eat; this is My body"; "This is My blood". They could never have been ex-

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pected to understand by words spoken in these circumstances the literal and physical body and blood of the Lord. And yet we must endeavour to hold fast in some form or another this element of participation which seems stamped on the words of the institution even more visibly than that of commemoration.

Thus, by these two sacraments the Church which He had instituted is at once distinguished from the world and furnished with the means of sustaining its own divinely implanted energies.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### PRAYER.

THE teachings of the Saviour on this subject are very numerous, and also very important, considering the difficulty which prayer, viewed as asking and receiving, presents to the speculative intellect, especially in these days when every change, physical and spiritual, seems to lie in the chain of strict natural causation, and thus to leave no room for answers to prayer in the manner in which from the exercise we would otherwise be led to expect them. Notice these points in the Saviour's teaching as to prayer.

#### I.—IT IS ENJOINED BY CHRIST, THOUGH ONLY INDIRECTLY.

“And He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luke xviii. 1). “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: . . . and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?” (Matt. vii. 7-11). “After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is

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in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation ; but deliver us from evil : for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen " (Matt. vi. 9-13). The duty of prayer is presupposed in each of these passages, as in many others—while the direct aim of the first two is rather to encourage the exercise, than to enjoin it as a duty—and that of the last to point out its proper objects and spirit. The truth is, there is not any word of Christ which has for its direct and proper aim to inculcate the duty of prayer, just as one does not find any text to affirm the existence of God. The truth of the Divine existence is taken for granted, so it seems taken for granted by the Saviour that man in his weakness and need will be moved to pray to God, if only he is encouraged to hope for an answer. Accordingly, the larger portion of the Saviour's teachings on the subject have this for their end, to give assurances of answers to prayer. All the more strongly, however, is the dutifulness of prayer implied in His words.

## II.—IT IS EXEMPLIFIED BY CHRIST.

This is very important as teaching us that even in the holiest life, the life of unbroken communion with God, there is room, if we may not say need, for special acts and seasons of devotion. It is instructive also to note the more prominent occasions on which notice is given in the gospels of these special seasons of prayer.

1. It is employed as a means of refreshment or of rest after toil. In the first chapter of Mark, we have a description of work continued all the day ; one act of miraculous healing after another ; not stopping even with the



sunset, but pursued into the early hours of night. After a few brief hours of sleep, it is said: "In the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" (Mark i. 35). We read that on a similar occasion, "When He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray" (Matt. xiv. 23). Here also He was seeking rest after a season of toil and discouragement, and this was the form which His quest of refreshment and rest took, "He departed into a mountain to pray" (Mark vi. 46).

2. It is employed as a preparation for important steps in life. One such step in the Saviour's life was His choosing of the Apostles—His selection of the men who were to be the companions of His ministry, and who were to carry that ministry forward when He Himself had left the earth. Luke tells us that this important act was preceded by a season of prolonged prayer: "And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called unto Him His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named Apostles" (Luke vi. 12, 13). Again how instructive, may it not be said, how full of rebuke!

3. It enters into the Saviour's life as a condition of glorification. There were two occasions in His life when unmistakable testimony was borne from above to His Divine dignity—first, on the occasion of His baptism by John, and second, on the Mount of Transfiguration; and on both occasions He was engaged in prayer: "It came to pass, that Jesus also being baptised, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a

bodily shape, like a dove, upon Him ; and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art My beloved Son ; in Thee I am well pleased " (Luke iii. 21-22) ; " And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening " (Luke ix. 29).

4. It was employed as a preparation for suffering. When the hour of His last suffering was at hand He retired to the garden of Gethsemane, and there said to His disciples : " Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder " (Matt. xxvi. 36). In all these connections the praying Saviour is our example.

### III.—ITS OBJECTS SPECIFIED.

In the Lord's Prayer these are temporal and spiritual, and the spiritual are divided into personal and non-personal. The latter have the priority. They come first in time and form the burden of three petitions, the hallowing of God's name, the coming of His kingdom, and the doing of His will by men at large. The personal blessings or objects follow—first, the daily bread, which may be regarded as including all that is necessary to our physical well-being ; and second, the forgiveness of sins, and the help against temptation. These may be regarded, therefore, as designating the objects of daily prayer ; warranting the presentation of petitions even for earthly blessings, such as food, raiment, health, but commending or enjoining the offering of petitions also for the spiritual blessings of the need of which we can so easily become forgetful, and for spiritual blessings other than those which are strictly personal. The priority which these receive, and the proportion in which they are present are really the most instructive features of the Lord's Prayer. It almost seems to imply, that we can pray rightly for earthly good, even for spiritual good of the

earthly kind, only when we have embraced in our thought and desire the lofty and wide interests of God's Kingdom.

Special objects connected with the occasions on which Christ spoke are presented in several texts. (a) For labourers for the harvest field of the world. "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest" (Matt. ix. 38); and so, though the occasion is different, "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth labourers into His harvest" (Luke x. 2). The terms show how distinctly the Saviour recognised at this time His work to be the work of God. (b) Against temptation. "Pray that ye enter not into temptation" (Luke xxii. 40). The connection in which this injunction is given in Matthew lends solemn weight to it. The Saviour had first said to the three disciples: "Tarry ye here, and watch with Me" (Matt. xxvi. 38). In their weakness they failed to do so. They slept when they should have watched. It was then He said, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matt. xxvi. 41); the application being that if they had watched in sympathy with Him, this watch would have protected their own spirits, but now having failed in this respect, let them look out for their own protection from evil, that is, sin or temptation to it—let them betake themselves to prayer. (c) For spiritual power. This is specified in connection with the failure of the disciples to cast out the evil spirit from the child, when the Saviour was on the Mount of Transfiguration, leading Him to say in answer to their request for an explanation of the failure: "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matt. xvii. 21). In other words, among the objects which



may be embraced in the prayers of Christ's disciples, and not otherwise attainable, is spiritual power of a high and rare kind ; power adequate to coping with the tyrannous and gigantic forces of evil. (*d*) For the Holy Spirit. This is taught by implication in the Saviour's saying : " If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children ; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him ? " (Luke xi. 13).

#### IV.—THE CONDITIONS OF ACCEPTABLE PRAYER SPECIFIED.

1. A forgiving spirit. " And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any ; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses " (Mark xi. 25, 26). This is enjoined especially in connection with the prayer for forgiveness from God, and it is presented so often, and with such emphasis, by the Saviour, that there is no disregarding it. Only as ready to exercise forgiveness towards our fellow-men, nay, as having exercised it, where offence has been given by them, are we permitted to indulge the hope of the Divine forgiveness. The explanation can scarcely be, that our forgiveness of our fellow-men gives us a claim on God's forgiveness of us, or even makes us worthy to receive it, but that it shows our fitness to receive God's forgiveness, even as the exercise of an unforgiving spirit would indicate the contrary. The fitting ethical condition for the reception of God's forgiveness is wanting, when the suppliant for it cherishes an unforgiving spirit towards his fellow-men : " For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will

also forgive you : but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses " (Matt. vi. 14, 15).

2. Faith. And as it would appear from the connection, not simply trust in God in general, as the hearer of prayer, but the specific confidence that He will give what is asked. This is specially evident in the Saviour's words as they are given in Mark : " What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them " (Mark xi. 24). This can scarcely mean, though it has been supposed to do so, that a man has simply to set his heart on any object whatever, and to work himself up to the conviction that God will give it him, in order to get it. It is not only that this would be a very dangerous power for man to possess, dangerous to his own welfare ; it would destroy in large measure the moral character of the exercise, disconnecting it largely, if not entirely, with that spiritual harmony of the nature with the will of God which supplies the most intelligible explanation of answered prayer. In the very nature of the case an assurance like this must have its limitations. The thing desired must be in accordance with the will of God, and must be such as tends to His glory. The conviction or confidence which is entertained must have the seat in a heart which is in sympathy with God's plans for the good of the race. In that case, we may regard it as the fruit of His Spirit. It is equally evident that the best of men must often have to pray where a confidence of receiving the exact thing that is asked is not forthcoming, and where the most earnest pleading for health or friend must end as Christ's own did, " Not My will, but Thine, be done ".

It is easier to understand two other conditions which are specified.

3. Presentation in Christ's name. "And whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it" (John xiv. 13, 14); and so, "Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you" (John xv. 16). The condition here is intensely moral. It need not be said that it does not mean simply to put Christ's name before our requests in any merely formal way. To pray "in Christ's name" is to pray as being one with Christ in His revealed character; to pray as being as a disciple *in* Him. The phrase which is so often repeated in the gospels and in the epistles is first found here (John xiv. 13): "Whatsoever ye shall ask" (the Father) "in My name" is equivalent to, Whatsoever ye shall ask as My disciples, as in Me, or, as one with Me—"that will I do". The asking is of the Father, the answer is from, or at least through, Christ—through His potent will. If this seems an unlimited promise of good, "Whatsoever ye shall ask," it is not to be overlooked that the words "in My name," which secure the effectualness of the prayer, do at the same time virtually limit its object. For the prayer in Christ's name must be consistent with Christ's character. How, for example, ask exemption from sorrow in the name of Him who was the man of sorrows, or worldly honours in the name of Him who scorned them. Thus viewed, the condition, "in My name," is an instructive as well as a reassuring one.

4. Abiding in Christ. "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John xv. 7). The condition here is not very different from the immediately preceding one, and, like it, it is intensely moral. In the measure in which the believer

abides in Christ, shares Christ's life, has his thought and feeling shaped by Christ's words, his petitions will be the exponents of Christ's will, and so must be heard. It is important to notice how the promise of the absolute fulfilment of prayer is connected with the personal fellowship of the believer with Christ both in the synoptists and in St. John. Compare Matthew xviii., xix., xx. and John xv., xvi. We may surely say that any assurances of answers to prayer disconnected with personal fellowship with Christ would be, not a blessing, but rather a curse.

#### V.—ACCESSORY QUALITIES IN ACCEPTABLE PRAYER.

We cannot speak of them as indispensable conditions like the foregoing; but are nevertheless commended if not enjoined by the Saviour.

1. Secrecy. "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and, when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly" (Matt. vi. 6); this in contrast to those who prayed to be seen of men. The virtue is not so much in the secrecy, as in the sincerity of which the secrecy is a pledge; even as the vice of the prayers at the street corners was not in the openness or the publicity, but in hypocrisy to which it ministered.

2. Concert. "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven" (Matt. xviii. 19). Are we to understand the special assurance of answer to concerted prayer as to be explained by the circumstance that such concert would naturally be the result of harmony with the Divine will of

those thus one in desire? It comes immediately after the words, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven," and is regarded as the same power in the form of answered prayer.

3. Intelligence. We reach this requirement in a rather negative way. To the mother of the sons of Zebedee who had asked, "Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left, in Thy kingdom," Jesus answered, "Ye know not what ye ask" (Matt. xx. 21, 22); a rebuke to which how often do we all expose ourselves.

#### VI.—ASSURANCES OF ANSWER.

It is easy to raise intellectual difficulties here, but according to Christ, to pray is to ask; not simply to worship or to hold communion, but to ask—and to ask in His name is to receive. This and nothing less is the burden of New Testament assurance (Matt. vii. 7-11; John xv. 7). There is a positive superabundance of statement to this effect, if such were possible.



## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THE SABBATH.

THE Sabbath of our Lord's time, it will be understood, was the Jewish Sabbath, the seventh day of the week. What are His teachings regarding it ; the teachings of His word and of His life?

1. He honoured it. (*a*) In acts of worship : " And when the Sabbath day was come, He began to teach in the synagogue " (Mark vi. 2). In other words, He used the day to meet with the people, and to instruct them in the knowledge of Divine truth. Nor was this an incidental or exceptional use of the day, or of a portion of it. It was His custom : " And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read " (Luke iv. 16). He recognised the need of stated periods and places for worship and for religious instruction. (*b*) By acts of mercy. More than one of His acts of healing were wrought on that day. If the day was not chosen for this purpose, as we might almost feel, at least there was no disposition to avoid it, as unsuitable or partaking of the nature of a desecration. There is the case of the healing of the man with the withered hand in the synagogue (Matt. xii. 10-13) ; and that of the impotent man at the pool (John v. 5-9).

2. He defends its apparent violations. (*a*) By quotations from the Old Testament : " Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungered, and they that were with him ;

how he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the Sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless" (Matt. xii. 3-5). (b) By argument: "What man shall there be among you that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days" (Matt. xii. 11, 12; and see Luke xiv. 5); "Doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" (Luke xiii. 15, 16); "If a man on the Sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at Me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath day?" (John vii. 23).

3. He explains its true character and aim; man's true good—or man's rest: "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark ii. 27). The object of the institution is not to ennoble a day but to bless man by its means, a most important and far-reaching principle. It will depend on the extent in which we contemplate man in his moral and spiritual aspects and interests how largely these bulk in our eye—how far we can make good for the Sabbath the religious character which is ordinarily claimed for it. The title of the labouring man to make it a day of physical rest is assuredly found here.

4. He claims lordship over it, and claims it exactly in

this connection. He the Son of Man ; the Head of humanity is Lord of the Sabbath just because it was made for man ; but the Lord of it, for what purpose, not surely to abolish it but to own it, to interpret, to ennoble it, to show how it can be turned to account for highest good.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE OBLIGATION TO SPREAD THE GOSPEL.

THE teachings of the Saviour on this point are not numerous, but they are very important. They furnish :—

1. The ground of this obligation. The command of Christ: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. xxviii. 19, R.V.); "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark xvi. 15). One may say, indeed, that the command thus expressed is not the only ground, or perhaps not properly even a ground at all. The real ground is the world's need of the Gospel, and the availability of the Gospel for that need. But the Church in the absence of any express command might have been long in seeing this, even as, notwithstanding the command, it has been slow to see it. All the more might this have been the case from the circumstance that Judaism, in which the disciples have been brought up, was in one sense a particularistic religion. Accordingly the obligation is not left to be inferred, it is made to rest on an express command.

2. The scope of the obligation. There can be little doubt, one would think, that the *παντα τὰ ἔθνη* of Matthew, and the *τον κόσμον ἅπαντα* of Mark, include the whole world, or the whole human family, though interpreters of the materialistic type call attention in this connection to the small portion of the earth's surface which was known (as they allege) to the Saviour, or even known to exist.

Holding, as we must do, that the world in its wide extent was meant, the conception of the universal spread of the Gospel, and the command which contemplates it, must be regarded as a very striking one coming from One whose earthly dwelling-place had been confined to one small portion of the world's surface. The idea of some that the Jews were not included in the *ἐθνη*, and that the command virtually implies their rejection, is not one to be entertained for a moment. Those who first acted on this command, the first preachers of the Gospel, so far from excepting the Jews, uniformly bore their testimony to them first. The phrase in Mark, *πάσῃ τῇ κτίσει*, "to every creature," deserves attention. It would seem that it could have been to men only, to human beings, that the Gospel was to be preached. But it seems doubtful whether *κτίσις* is ever used in the New Testament of mankind alone. Accordingly Bengel and others have seen a reference here to the benefits which the inferior creation is to share in the redemption work of Christ.

3. The subject or contents of the preaching which is made thus obligatory, and whose sphere is the world. The most general designation is "the Gospel," the good tidings, literally, the "good spell," or "God-spell," respecting Jesus Christ. The Church on which this obligation rests is entrusted with a message; it is not asked in its wisdom to make one, but to proclaim it; not to philosophise about it, but to preach it, as received. The subject is still further designated as the Kingdom of God, "Go thou and preach the Kingdom of God" (Luke ix. 60); that is, the setting up on the earth of a veritable Kingdom of God, a society in which God's authority should be recognised and His will done.

The contents of the message are brought before us in more specific forms, as in the passage, "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations" (Luke xxiv. 47). This "remission of sins" is included in the proclamation, if it is not indeed its main purport, but it is a remission conditioned on repentance, and involving wherever it is proffered a summons to men to repent of sin.

4. The persons on whom the obligation rests. It is almost universally conceded now that these are those forming the Church of Christ; not the Apostles only, but the Apostles with others of believing character, and the Apostles, even, as members of the living body of Christ: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature". The obligation is one therefore which must be held to rest primarily on the Church as a whole, to be performed in the nature of things by its members and teachers, the manner of appointing which is not here prescribed. "By these words," says Alford, "the missionary office is bound upon the Church throughout all ages, till every part of the earth shall have been evangelised."

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### RETRIBUTION AND REWARD.

WE take these together, as the underlying principles of both are in important respects the same. The righteousness of God is concerned in both, while it is no doubt true that His grace also is operating in the bestowal of the latter. The nature and contents of the one will also be found to be in many respects the exact opposite of the nature and contents of the other. It will, therefore, be found useful to examine them together. One circumstance can scarcely fail to strike the thoughtful student of the Saviour's words, *viz.*, that gentle and compassionate as He was, the number of these which bear a retributive character is very much larger than those which designate the rewards of His kingdom. Incidental and undesigned evidence is thus afforded of the greater prevalence in the world of the Saviour's day of various forms of unbelief and evil, than of faith and righteousness. To begin :—

#### I.—RETRIBUTION.

1. Its nature and contents. (a) The exposure of all that is most secret : " There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed ; and hid, that shall not be known " (Matt. x. 26 ; Luke xii. 2). The statement, a very solemn one, is one which is made in very different connections. In Luke viii. 17 it has the force of an assurance that the truth which He had begun to teach should be gradually unfolded to them, until there should be nothing left in the plan of God (His

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mysteries, verse 11) which should be obscure or hidden. Here, however, it is spoken with obvious reference to the retribution which should overtake all that is most covert in human action. And this retribution is seen to consist just in its exposure, suggesting the thought that sin, wickedness, hypocrisy is something so odious that just to drag it to light is to punish it in a very real and terrible way. This, the Saviour's word assures us, shall be done. The veil shall be lifted from the face of the wrongdoing which has clothed itself under the thickest disguise (comp. 2 Cor. v. 10, R.V.). (b) The withdrawal of the Saviour's presence : " Behold, your house is left unto you desolate : and," or *but*, " I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord " (Luke xiii. 35). The word "desolate" seems to be an interpolation. Omitting it the force of the first part of the statement would seem to be : Jerusalem, Israel, is given over to a ruin which He alone could have averted. His withdrawal signifies its exposure to destructive judgment, and that withdrawal shall not be for a brief period, and it shall be for them absolute. This is the force of the adversative particle "  $\delta\epsilon$ ," which is preferable to "  $\gamma\alpha\rho$  " : " Ye shall not see Me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord ". Some regard the reference to be to His triumphal entry into Jerusalem before His death ; but this would reduce the solemn statement to something like insignificance. The meaning is rather that Israel's penitent return to faith should precede His coming again, and that until their return to faith, until seized of a spirit, which should say, " Blessed is He that cometh," this coming should be delayed ; they who had refused to believe on Him should no more see Him. Accord-



ingly, generalising the statement, we gather this as its significance, that the rejection of the Saviour is punished by the judicial withdrawal of His presence and the proffers of His grace. "The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and ye shall not see it" (Luke xvii. 22). (c) The infliction of positive and fearful suffering. In the two forms already considered we have seen sin as it were becoming its own punishment. In the one case, it is punished simply in its disclosure. In the other, the eye which refused to regard Christ loses the power of seeing Him. He is withdrawn from its vision. In the same way, the ruin which overtakes the mere hearer of the word, the hearer and not the doer, under the figure of the ruin of a house built upon the sand, and carried away by the floods (Matt. vii. 26, 27), may be regarded as coming under the category of natural retribution.

Many would be disposed to stop at this point, and make the whole punishment of sin by way of natural consequence. There are various statements of Christ on the subject which are irreconcilable with this view, such as, "The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. xiii. 41, 42). Similar language is found as applied to the Lord's dealings with the unfaithful servant (Luke xii. 46, 47). He "will cut him in sunder (marginal reading, R.V., "severely scourge him"), and will appoint him (professing disciple as he was) his portion with the unbelievers". This portion might be imprisonment, or even the extreme penalty of the law—the cross, death—which was often preceded by scourging. Of him who had not the wedding garment, it is said: "Bind him

hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. xxii. 13). Now one need not hesitate to admit that the language is figurative—that it is not necessary to understand a literal fire, literal darkness, but the figures must have some meaning corresponding to their terms, and, if so, if this language is not misleading, then on the authority of Him to whom has been committed all judgment, unfaithfulness, unbelief, disobedience, sin in all forms, shall be visited with positive and fearful suffering. This is the solemn statement of Christ, a statement which gains increased significance from the very gentleness and tenderness of Him who makes it.

2. Its ground. (a) No doubt the main ground, that which in a manner underlies all others, is the unbelieving rejection of the Saviour: "He that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John iii. 18, R.V. ; so also John iii. 36). The use of the perfects in the former passage will be noted, "hath been judged," or "condemned," because "he hath not believed". He is not in the state of one who believed when it was open to him to do so. In any case unbelief is made here as elsewhere the condemning sin. The explanation seems to be twofold ; first, it is the rejection of the divinely appointed method of salvation, and therefore, so to speak, binds the whole sins of the past to the man, as well as adds one to their number ; and second, it is regarded in the New Testament as summing up and revealing the real character of the life. The man's treatment of the Saviour is uniformly regarded as an indication of what the man at heart is. There is therefore nothing arbitrary in the attachment of condemnation to the unbelieving rejection of Him.

But while this is forthcoming as the main ground of retribution in the gospels, there are others specified by Christ which it may be useful to consider, which must at least be enumerated. (b) Idle, that is, morally useless speech: "I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. xii. 36, 37). The term is *ἀργον* = *a ērgon*, literally "without result," that is, ethically profitless; a negative term but probably meant, according to the context, to be equivalent to *πονηρον*, evil. The explanation of this statement is found in the fact that the real disposition or character of the man is revealed in his speech, not of course to the exclusion of his deeds; and thus it can be the determining principle of his judgment. It may be added here, that speech does not only reveal the man but tends to make him what he becomes.

(c) Ostentation in religion, or, perhaps, better, insincerity in religion, or hypocrisy: "Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men to be seen of them; else ye have no reward with your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. vi. 1, R.V.); "Verily I say unto you they have received (*ἀπέχουσιν*, have in full, exhaust) their reward" (Matt. vi. 5, 16). Here also belong the woes which the Saviour denounced with such terrible emphasis against the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. xxiii. 13-29). Other sins indeed come into light, as the severe uncharitable judgments of their fellow-men, the disregard of the moral while attending to the ceremonial, but the prevailing accusation, that which lends weight to all the others, is insincerity, the want of truth.

(d) Leading the weak followers of Christ to sin: "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me,

it were better (R.V., it is profitable) for him that a millstone (R.V., a great millstone, *μύλος ὀνικὸς*, a millstone turned by an ass as distinguished from the smaller one wrought by the hand) were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matt. xviii. 6; Mark ix. 42). The "little ones" are beginners in the faith, and therefore all the more easily tripped up in their walk. The warning of the Saviour (Take heed) is occasioned on the one hand by the extreme facility of causing offence to these, and on the other by the terrible danger to which it exposes him who causes it. The warning, indeed, is capable of being understood in two ways. It might mean: "It is better for him that a millstone should have been hanged about his neck, and he drowned, before the day when he gives this offence"; or it may mean, as perhaps it has been generally understood to mean, that, now that the offence has been caused, it is better for him to undergo this treatment. In any case, the sin, in the light of the warning uttered, is seen to be a heinous one. Godet says: "The lost soul, like an eternal burden, is bound to him who has dragged it into evil, and in turn drags him into the abyss".

(e) Failure to use the talents bestowed. This is, if not the main lesson, yet at least one of the lessons of the parable of the unprofitable servant (Matt. xxv. 14-30). The charge, on the ground of which the servant is cast into outer darkness, is that he was "unprofitable," that he had hidden, that is, had not used the talent which had been bestowed on him.

(f) The neglect of the oppressed and suffering, either of believers or of mankind—more probably the latter. This ground of retribution is lifted into prominence among, if

not above, all the others, by the place it is made to hold in the description of the scene of judgment (Matt. xxv. 41-46). The charge brought against those to whom the awful "Depart ye" is spoken is: "I was an hungered, and ye gave Me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in: naked, and ye clothed Me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited Me not. Then shall they also answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto Thee? Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these (My brethren), ye did it not to Me." The exercise of practical benevolence, in the relief of suffering of all kinds, receives the very highest importance by these words, as the neglect of it, selfish indifference in the presence of poverty and wretchedness, is stamped visibly and ineffaceably with the seal of Christ's strong condemnation.

These are, if not all, yet at least the more prominent grounds of retribution as given by Christ.

3. It begins in this life. Of those who do their righteousness to be seen of men, it is said, "They have their reward". The meaning probably is, they gain, at least with some, the reputation for goodness which they sought; but along with this there may well be some reference to the scorn which their conduct awakens in the breast of those who can detect their hypocrisy. More to the point, however, is the declaration: "By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive" (Matt. xiii. 14); the principle being that in the way of natural retribution the mind loses the power of apprehending the truth which it has disregarded, and on which it has

refused to act. The light continues to shine, but the organ of vision ceases to possess the power which it once had of receiving the light. This is retribution as it goes on under our very eyes, in accordance with the Saviour's words: "Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath" (Matt. xxv. 29; so also Luke viii. 18).

4. It shall be proportioned to privilege; weightier where more light has been enjoyed; less weighty where less advantages have been bestowed. The most distinct assertion of this principle is contained in the Saviour's words: "And that servant which knew His Lord's will, and prepared not himself (R.V., made not ready), neither did according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes" (Luke xii. 47). This is in accordance with equity, which, if in anything, shall surely be exemplified in the final judgment of mankind. How the principle shall be applied, we may be unable to see, that it shall be applied we may confidently believe. The same truth is taught, "Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city" (Matt. x. 15; xi. 21-23). And, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light" (John iii. 19). The greatness of the light enjoyed measures the depth of the condemnation, where the light—not "light," but *the* light—is disregarded. So, "The Son of Man shall come . . . and then He shall reward every man according to His works" (Matt. xvi. 27). The word is *ἀποδώσει*, and is equally suitable to reward and retribution; in reality covers both.

5. It is in some instances intensified by the sins of former

generations: "That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar" (Matt. xxiii. 35). The reference in the latter is probably to that Zecharias whose violent death is mentioned in 2 Chronicles xxiv. 20, 21. He is said, indeed, to have been the son of Jehoiada. Different explanations have been offered of this discrepancy; one, suggested by Godet, that Jehoiada may have been the grandfather of Zacharias; another that the Evangelist may have been mistaken. The truth affirmed is obvious, and in some of its aspects awful—that sin is, in the case of societies, if not also in that of individuals, not always punished fully at the date of its commission, but in part at least in the persons of those who come after, and who by following in the same course make the sin their own. Godet says, "It is a law of the Divine government, which controls the lot of societies, as well as that of individuals, that God does not correct a development once commenced by premature judgment. While still warning the sinner, He leaves his sin to ripen; and at the appointed hour He strikes, not for the present wickedness only, but for all which precedes. According to this law it is that Jesus sees coming on the Israel about Him the whole storm of wrath which has gathered from the torrents of innocent blood shed since the beginning of the human race."

## II.—REWARD.

As has been already remarked, the passages which bear on this subject are much fewer than those which refer to retribution, but they are very important and instructive.

Following somewhat the same order, there is presented to us :—

1. The nature of the Christian reward. Speaking generally, the reward is eternal life ; as something begun, indeed, here, but carried forward and consummated in the world to come. Life, in the high and blessed sense of the word, designates the unparalleled boon by which the Saviour shall recompense the faith and the service of His people. And as begun now, the reward, like the retribution, is bestowed in a degree in the present state : “ I give unto them eternal life ; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand ” (John x. 28).

(a) Along with this, however, the Saviour specifies “ an hundredfold ” of that which has been surrendered for His sake. In reply to Peter’s question, He said, “ There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake, and the Gospel’s, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions ; and in the world to come eternal life ” (Mark x. 29, 30). In the light of facts, the hundredfold recompense of these things would seem to be as to enjoyment rather than as to possession. The painful surrender of earthly goods, and the painful rupture of earthly ties, are abundantly compensated by the formation of new spiritual bonds, in larger numbers, and by the truer enjoyment of earthly comforts. “ The communion of Christian love in reality procures for each believer the enjoyment of every sort of good belonging to his brethren ” (Godet). But the assurance, as if to show that it is the inheritance of the earth in a higher sense that is meant, is qualified by the addition “ with persecutions ”,



(b) More than one declaration presents us with the idea of "authority," "rule," as entering into the reward: "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me; that ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke xxii. 29, 30). The words would seem to have special reference (see also those in Matt. xix. 28-30) to the Apostles, and we see their fulfilment in the power which they exercised in founding the Church of Christ, and in the power which they wield to this day over the nations of the world. They are up to the present its virtual rulers. To power there is added in the end of the passage the exercise of judgment in relation specially to Israel. This is the prerogative of the twelve. In a measure this promise of power is made good to all believers. He who has become possessed of Christ's truth and of Christ's life cannot but exert influence on others, gain control over them. The same idea is expressed under another figure and in a more general way: "Verily I say unto you, that He shall make him ruler over all His goods" (Matt. xxiv. 47); and again in the parable of the talents: "I will make thee ruler over many things" (Matt. xxv. 21, 23). Accordingly, we may say it is not only the assurance of life, but specifically that of authority and honour which Christ gives to His servants. They are wielding, they shall more and more wield, the power of the world.

2. The ground of the Christian reward. The radical and essential one, no doubt, is faith in Jesus Christ—in Himself. It runs everywhere, "He that believeth". Specific mention, however, is made of acts of kindness done to His followers, and to men in general, as laying the foundation for His bestowments of reward: "Whosoever shall give to drink

unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward" (Matt. x. 42). Here the object of the kindness is a disciple of Christ; the kindness is done to him as such, and though in itself small and costing little, there is made to it the assurance of an unfailing recompense: "I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me" (Matt. xxv. 35, 36). It is still acts of kindness to the suffering that are made the basis of the reward—of the "Come, ye blessed of My Father," but in this case they may be regarded as done not to disciples only, but to suffering men, whether disciples or not. What must be noted in view of both statements is the great prominence given by Christ to acts of benevolence as ensuring recognition by Him in the day of final award.

3. An important qualification in the matter of the bestowal of these rewards. "To sit on My right hand and on My left, is not Mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father" (Matt. xx. 23). The Revised Version reads: "but it is for them for whom it hath been prepared of My Father". Different views have been taken of the declaration. Meyer regards it as pointing to a *reserve* of the Father similar to that mentioned in Matthew xxiv. 36. In that case it seems difficult to reconcile it with the statement: "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John v. 22). Chrysostom, Grotius and others take ἀλλὰ as equal to εἰ μὴ, and read, "it is not in Me to give, except to those for whom it is prepared of My Father".

The force of the statement in this case would be that rewards, positions of honour in Christ's kingdom, are not arbitrarily bestowed, are not given as a matter of favour, and in answer to importunate requests.

Putting the whole teaching under this head together, we are assured on the authority of Christ that the government of the world is moral, that the character of the life, as sincere or insincere, as benevolent or selfish, as believing or unbelieving, will determine the nature of the reward or the retribution—that, however appearances might point to the contrary, oppression and sin shall not be unpunished, lowly acts of kindness shall not be unrewarded.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST.

THE event is one which occupies a large place in the gospels. The Saviour alludes to it again and again, and in so doing uses terms not obviously accordant with one another, and still less with the actual facts as these have been developed in history. The most important point to be determined is, What is meant by this coming? In what sense is it employed by Christ? And very specially, Is it used always in the same sense and with the same specific reference, or are the unmistakable difficulties connected with the matter to find their solution in the different meanings in which the word is used? Let us note the texts which relate to:—

#### I.—ITS NATURE.

1. Many if not all of the texts lead us to think of it as a visible unmistakable appearance in history, one in regard to whose occurrence no doubt could be entertained. The terms are: "The Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father, with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works" (Matt. xvi. 27; similarly Matt. xxv. 31); "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matt. xxvi. 64). Whatever the nature and purpose of the coming, language of this kind would seem to point it out as beyond doubt of a public and visible kind, recognisable by all. The terms are such that it could

scarcely be explained to mean only a spiritual coming, a coming in the faith and hearts of His people. It is not denied that the term may sometimes have this meaning in the New Testament, but obviously such an advent could scarcely meet the requirements of such language as has been quoted, which points to a visible and glorious manifestation. The analogy which subsists between the first and second advents comprises this view, as against those who would explain, as Alger, all the declarations respecting Christ's second coming as simply a spiritual manifestation of His power.

2. The coming is further characterised as a coming to rule and to bestow rewards on His faithful servants, especially in the way of admitting them to a share in His authority. "When the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. xix. 28). Now, if these words are to be regarded as descriptive of an advent of the Saviour at all, as they appear to be, it is almost certain that they do not designate the final advent, the advent which shall wind up the present dispensation of things, for in immediate connection with this statement, and as in some way resulting from the fact announced, it is said that those who have forsaken all for Him shall receive an hundredfold of houses, brethren, lands, "now in this time" (Mark x. 30); implying the continuance of the present order of things. Almost the same view is presented accompanied by the same conclusion: "Henceforth" (not "hereafter," *ἀπ' ἄρτι*) "ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matt. xxvi. 64). Here, again, from the terms employed, the immediate reference of the words could not have been to the final advent; the

fact that by the term "henceforth" the glorification which those addressed were to behold was to be immediately consequent on His betrayal and crucifixion is proof enough of this (comp. John xiii. 31). Now we know that the final advent of Christ was never contemplated by Him as so related to the date of His crucifixion in immediate connection. In any view of it a certain period was to elapse before the end was to come.

3. But the coming is spoken of in other passages in terms which are applicable only to the end of the world, and designate the final judgment of mankind as its aim. This is the most natural interpretation of the words: "For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He shall reward every man according to his works" (Matt. xvi. 27). The only circumstance which throws doubt upon the reference here is the statement in the following verse: "There be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom," a statement which will be afterwards considered. More decisive are the words: "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory; and before Him shall be gathered all nations" (Matt. xxv. 31 ff.); and similarly: "Then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory; and then shall He send His angels and shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven" (Mark xiii. 26, 27). Such language can only apply to that advent of the Lord, which shall wind up the present order of the world, and settle the destinies of mankind; that event, therefore, which is more

generally spoken of as the second coming of Christ. The further determination of what is meant by the language had better be reserved till we consider the Saviour's statements respecting :—

## II.—ITS DATE.

Here we come upon two apparently incompatible lines of expression.

1. We have statements in which it is spoken of as more or less near, as to fall within the experience of the then existing generation, many of whom should witness its glories and share its blessings. There is not only the statement: "I will come again and receive you unto Myself" (John xiv. 3), as if He should find them still living, and the statement to Peter respecting John: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" (John xxi. 22), a statement which seems to imply the possibility, at least, of the Saviour's second coming in the lifetime of that youngest of the twelve, and was mistakenly regarded as giving the assurance of this. Much more decisive on this point are the words: "But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come" (Matt. x. 23). The words occur in the instructions given by the Saviour to the disciples whom He was commissioning to preach the Gospel. In this connection, the coming of the Son of Man here seems to be the coming of Israel's judgment day; carrying with it the destruction of the impenitent of the nation. The force of the precept is virtually this, Do not hesitate to flee from any city which does not give you welcome, for however diligent you may be, you will not have time to overtake

them all before Israel's crisis arrives. Thus while the passage speaks of a coming of the Son of Man as to take place within a very limited time, it suggests its own explanation. To the same effect are the words : " There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom " (Matt. xvi. 28). " This generation shall not pass, till all these things be done " (Mark xiii. 30). In the context the Saviour had been speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem, and afterwards of a coming of the Son of Man in the clouds with great power and glory, and of the gathering of His elect from the four winds. The attempt to get rid of this difficulty by rendering " generation " as " this present race," is rather forced. It seems to have been the intention of the Saviour to teach that something which could be called a coming of the Son of Man should take place during the life of some to whom He was speaking (see also Matt. xxiv. 30-34).

2. We have also statements in which it was spoken of as more or less remote. Events which must cover a considerable period are represented as having first to take place. Not single texts only or chiefly, so much as the whole tenor of Christ's teaching seems to imply that so far from the end being at hand, in the sense of the complete winding up of the world's history, a long period of development, of growth, of conflict between the good and the evil, was before the kingdom, the setting up of which He had announced. " The mere fact of Christ's wishing to institute a Church raises a presumption in favour of the view that He anticipated for the kingdom, not consummation by an early catastrophe, but a lengthened history " (Bruce). The presumption is immensely strengthened by the teaching in the



parables of the sower, the wheat and the tares, the mustard seed, and the seed growing gradually. According to the last, the end, the catastrophe, expressed by the "putting in of the sickle," comes at the end of a lengthened process of development. The same truth, a Parousia, delayed beyond expectation, seems to supply the presupposition of the two parables which inculcate perseverance in prayer, especially if we regard the Church which is thus admonished as praying for the coming of the kingdom. The delay is so long that the faithful are in danger of losing heart. The faith in its coming, or His coming, has almost died out. This seems the force of the interrogation: "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Luke xviii. 8). The faith here does not appear to be, faith in Christ, the faith by which a man becomes a disciple, but rather faith with regard to that of which the preceding verse has spoken, God's coming in the person of the Son of Man to redress the wrongs of His own elect. The frequent exhortations to "watch" are also best understood when the event is not only regarded as coming "suddenly," but as coming after such a period of delay as is fitted to throw men off their guard. The parables of the ten virgins and of the upper servant abusing the inferior servants in the absence of the master, look in the same direction. They all presuppose as present to the mind of Christ a lengthened interval during which His presence was to be withdrawn.

3. Attention is called in this connection to the expression, "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke xxi. 24), which is most naturally regarded as designating the period during which the Gospel should be proclaimed to the Gentile world. "It points to a Gentile day of grace, analogous to Israel's time of visitation to which Jesus alluded in His lament over

Jerusalem" (Bruce). This time lasted for many centuries, in reality from the conquest of Canaan to the destruction of Jerusalem now at hand. The time of the Gentiles must surely cover some proportionate period, and cannot be restricted to a single generation. The inference appears to be a just one, that "Gentile opportunities must be commensurate with the magnitude of the work, and in analogy with God's way of dealing with men in grace as revealed in the past history of Israel" (Bruce). The statement: "The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and ye shall not see it" (Luke xvii. 22), seems likewise to proceed on the supposition of the lapse of a lengthened period of absence.

4. The most decisive single declaration, pointing to a remote date for His return is: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt. xxiv. 14); or, as given by another evangelist: "And the gospel must first be published among all nations" (Mark xiii. 10). It has been sought to meet the proof that these words seem to furnish of the truth, that Christ anticipated His return to earth as to take place at a remote period in two different ways. First, it is alleged that this actually took place within a generation of the Saviour's death, and before the destruction of Jerusalem, through the ministry especially of the Apostle Paul; and in confirmation of this view appeal is made to Colossians i. 6; 2 Timothy iv. 10. This is the view entertained by Alford and Meyer; the end spoken of in that case must be the end of the Jewish dispensation, coincident with the destruction of Jerusalem. Second, it is maintained by another class that "Jesus was ignorant of the extent of the world, just as Paul was, who actually thought and said that

the Gospel had already been preached in the whole world ". This latter is a view which any one entertaining a high and reverent estimate of the Lord's person would be slow to accept. Besides, even if accepted, it does not materially detract from the force of the proof. A single generation could not suffice for an effective witness respecting Christ even to the nations of the then known world, not even for those bordering on the Mediterranean Sea. The former view, that of Alford, is more tenable, but the declaration taken in connection with the general drift of the Saviour's teaching in the parables referred to, and in connection with the significant expression, "the times of the Gentiles," is best interpreted as pointing to a proclamation of the Gospel in all the world (even Meyer admits that the phrase cannot be limited to the Roman empire, or the then known world), before the second or glorious advent, and so it affords proof that in Christ's mind as He spoke that event was a remote one. His words: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Matt. xxiv. 36 ; Mark xiii. 32), also confirm this view. At least they are more consonant with the view which relegates the event spoken of to the remote future than that which makes it assuredly fall within the then existing generation.

5. Putting together the declarations respecting the nature and the date of His second coming we are in a position to establish some points respecting the subject. First, we can rebut the infidel suggestion that the Saviour regarded the destruction of Jerusalem as contemporaneous with the end of the world and the final judgment of mankind, and was therefore mistaken as to the facts. This is a favourite and plausible contention of unbelieving critics of the New Testament, and if it could be made good, it would go far

to overturn our confidence in the Saviour's teachings. It is plausible only. The twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew does indeed speak of both, and speak of them in a way which makes it extremely difficult for us to separate what is said on the one subject from that which is spoken on the other. Some regard this as due to Matthew having brought together what the Saviour said on two separate occasions. But in any case, in the general teachings of the Saviour, and in specific statements made, it is put beyond question that He could not have contemplated the end of the world as coincident with the destruction of the city, which, as He expressly predicted, should take place during the time of the then existing generation. Second, it seems to be put beyond doubt also that the words, "the coming of the Son of Man," are not always employed in the same sense and with reference to the same historical event. It is admitted that the words, "the coming of the Lord," are often used in Scripture for any signal manifestation of His presence either for judgment or for mercy. Able critics of the New Testament, with no strong bias in favour of orthodoxy, have recognised three distinct senses in which the words are employed ; first, His coming in the hearts of believers and by the communication of the Holy Ghost ; what Holtzman terms His dynamical coming. This is the meaning of the words : " We will come unto him and make Our abode with him " (John xiv. 23) ; " A little while, and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father " (John xvi. 16) ; " Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away and come unto you " (John xiv. 28). Notice, there is no term for "again" in the original. " I go away and I come," as if to teach us, what indeed seems to be the fact, that the going is the coming ;

the going in the flesh, the coming in the Spirit. Second, His coming at any great crisis, as at the destruction of the Jewish State and the firm establishment in the world of His kingdom—His coming in the display of His signal and victorious power. In this sense it is used in such passages as : “Henceforth ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven” (Matt. xxvi. 64, R.V.) ; “Until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom” (Matt. xxvi. 29) ; and in most of the statements in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew and thirteenth chapter of Mark, and, as some have thought, in all the declarations on the subject in the twenty-first chapter of Luke. This is termed by way of distinction by Holtzman, His historical coming. There remains, third, an apocalyptic coming at the end of the world ; His coming to determine the final destinies of mankind, and to bring the present system of things to a close. This is what is usually understood by the second advent. This would appear to be the sense in which the word is used in the passage : “When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory ; and before Him shall be gathered all nations” (Matt. xxv. 31 ff.). It would seem to be what is referred to when it is said : “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations ; and then shall the end come” (Matt. xxiv. 14) ; and as in many other passages so specially in another passage : “Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father” (Mark xiii. 32). “The declaration evidently refers to something concerning which He knows less than about Israel’s impending calamities.” The statement as implying

the limitation of the Saviour's knowledge even on a matter relating to the destinies of His kingdom, has naturally been the occasion of perplexity to Christian readers. Various explanations have been offered. One, that He did not know as man—did not know it in His capacity of Mediator, or what perhaps amounts to the same thing, did not know it as one of the points which it had been given Him to reveal. In that case the term "know" is used in a sense other than the natural one, and it is almost certainly ruled out by the connection in which it is found. The difficulty in taking the term in the usual sense is not only that it seems incompatible with the perfection of the Saviour's knowledge, but it is difficult to find in the event itself, the Parousia, anything so peculiar as to explain its withdrawal from the Saviour's knowledge. There seems nothing, however, but to so understand it. Of course the limitation is self-imposed. It must be regarded as a part of the self-humiliation to which He stooped, and is not therefore inconsistent with His original dignity. In this sense it is taken by Calvin, Meyer, Stier, Alford and Alexander. In this way, then, the more serious difficulties connected with the subject are overcome, while there is certainly room left for more light on many of the aspects of the question.

### III.—ITS SUDDENNESS AND UNEXPECTEDNESS.

Its suddenness and unexpectedness, notwithstanding all intimations, is emphasised in many declarations. This is the truth which is presupposed in the parable of the ten virgins. The event, when it came, would be apt to find the expectant Church in a state of somnolency (Matt. xxv. 1-13). The obligation to watchfulness is expressly enforced: "Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord

doth come. . . . Therefore be ye also ready : for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh " (Matt. xxiv. 42, 44). This aspect of it is further illustrated by its comparison with the unexpected occurrence of the flood in the days of Noah (Matt. xxiv. 37-39 ; Luke xvii. 26, 27) ; and of the destruction of Sodom in the days of Lot (Luke xvii. 28-30). In one passage, indeed, it is spoken of in terms which might lead us to imagine that its occurrence was so arranged as to take men by surprise : " For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth " (Luke xxi. 35). The point of comparison here is not the *results* which shall flow from it, for to some, at least, who shall be on the earth, to all true disciples, these shall be as unlike as possible to those which spring from the snare in which men are caught to their injury or their destruction, but simply the *unexpectedness* of the event. This is even more strongly brought out in the declaration : " When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth ? " (Luke xviii. 8). As already explained, " faith " here (*τὴν πίστιν*) is not faith in general, not the exercise of faith in virtue of which a man becomes a Christian, but rather, " that special faith of which the widow's is an image, which in spite of the judge's obstinate silence, and long apparent indifference, perseveres in claiming its right " (Godet) ; the believing expectation that, notwithstanding the long period of absence and silence, Christ will reappear to vindicate His own people and to give them deliverance.

#### IV.—ITS UNIVERSALITY AND INSTANTANEOUSNESS.

Sudden and unexpected, there shall be no mistaking of it when it comes. No mistaking of it anywhere. It shall be at once unmistakable and universal : " For as the

lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west ; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matt. xxiv. 27). "Men do not run here or there to see a flash of lightning. It shines simultaneously on all points of the horizon. So the Lord will appear at the same moment to the view of all living." What we need to do is to find a place for this solemn, in some aspects awful, in some glad, truth, not in our creed only, but among our living convictions and cherished hopes : "Looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (Tit. ii. 13, R.V.).



## CHAPTER XXX.

### THE RESURRECTION AND THE FUTURE LIFE.

THESE two are not identical, they are not even necessarily connected. The resurrection, indeed, implies the future life, but a future life does not necessarily imply the resurrection of the body. The Saviour it will be seen teaches both. In our treatment of the subject we shall commence with the latter ; the future life.

#### I.—ITS REALITY.

1. It is not so much directly taught, as it is everywhere taken for granted. It was the prevailing, with the exception of the Sadducees, the universal, belief of the Jews of our Lord's day. There was the less necessity therefore for the formal teaching of it. Its denial by the Sadducees gave the only occasion for this, and accordingly we find Him not only asserting but arguing for the truth against their unbelieving denials : " As touching the dead, that they rise : have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob ? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living " (Mark xii. 26, 27 ; Luke xx. 37, 38). The truth which is directly taught by the Saviour's use of these words is, not so much the resurrection of the body, this rather by implication, as the existence of human beings, of the patriarchs in the first place, after death. The force of the argument for a future state of existence which is contained in these words spoken


by God to Moses, and quoted by the Saviour, and which we might not have seen had not our attention been called to it by Him, seems to depend on two considerations. First, that God speaks of Himself in the language of the present as the God of the patriarchs, though long dead. It is not "I was," but "I am," the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob. Now the relationship expressed in the term "God of," is one which is inapplicable to dead as distinguished from living beings. God is not the God of dead but of living beings. Note the absence of the article. Second, it is suggested, if it is not indeed meant, that the relationship even viewed as one existing in the past, carries with it the idea of continued existence on the part of the creature with whom it is formed. If the Creator has taken into such relationship to Himself any part of His creation as to enable Him to speak of Himself as its God, this itself implies on its part the possession of such a character as is incompatible with a mere fleeting and transitory existence. Thus the great declaration of the law, "I am the Lord thy God," contains in it, as Alford remarks, the seed of immortality. It thus appears that the truth which is directly proved in these words is that of life after death rather than that of the resurrection of the body, and hence the conclusion has been drawn that the resurrection means nothing more than that the soul does not die with the body, but rises to a new and higher life. This conclusion is obviated, not only by other teachings of Christ which directly assert the opposite, but also by the fact that the Sadducean denial of the resurrection was accompanied by, and in fact had its root in, a denial also of the continued existence of the soul after death.

2. A difficulty of some extent is raised by the form in

which the Saviour's statement appears in Luke, where the statement runs: "But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; neither can they die any more, for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection" (Luke xx. 35, 36). The difficulty is not so much in the general statement that the ordinance of marriage, designed for the perpetuation of the race, has no place in the world to come, there being no more death, as in the apparent limitation of the resurrection spoken of to a class, those "which shall be accounted worthy". Alford, Godet and others, find in it a reference to a resurrection of the faithful which shall precede the general resurrection. The majority of commentators, without offering any very clear explanation of the expression, regard the view taken by Alford as unwarranted. In any case, the passage conveys to us the Saviour's explicit testimony to the reality of a state of conscious existence after death. If we have an assurance of it to-day, we owe it more than to all else to His word.

## II.—ITS CHARACTER.

1. As involving complete separation between the righteous and the wicked, together with the blessedness of the one and the misery of the other. This is the teaching of the parable of the tares (Matt. xiii. 30, 41-43), and of the net (Matt. xiii. 49, 50). It is also the teaching in Luke: "And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence" (Luke xvi. 26). It is especially the teaching of the description of the last judgment (Matt. xxv. 31-46).



Of the Son of Man coming in His glory it is said, "He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. . . . Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you. . . . Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire."

2. As coming in its blessed form to some we would have least expected to share it, and denied to others whose expectation of sharing such blessedness seemed to us well assured: "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. viii. 11, 12).

3. As implying locality or existence in place. This seems to be involved in the very nature of finite and individual being, it is especially involved in the resurrection of the body as ordinarily understood. However, relieved of its grosser characteristics, if there be body at all, it must be related to space. This view is combated by Alger and others, who hold the view simply of a spiritual resurrection; founding the claim with some ingenuity on the words of Christ spoken in reply to the statement of Martha's belief in the resurrection of her brother at the last day: "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die" (John xi. 25, 26). Alger regards this as equivalent to saying, "I am commissioned by the Father to bestow eternal life on all who believe in Me, but not in the manner you have anticipated. The true resurrection is not calling the body from

the tomb, but opening the fountains of eternal life in the soul. Over the soul that is filled with such an experience death has no power." The Saviour's words here do not require, perhaps do not admit of, such a meaning; one which would bring them into variance with His words elsewhere, where a literal resurrection, one out of the grave into which the body has been placed, is announced. The idea of locality as belonging to the future life is further suggested by the words, "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am ye may be also" (John xiv. 2, 3); though, as the language is to some extent figurative, too much force must not be attached to the expressions used.

4. As immediately consequent on death. Were entrance on the future life in any form dependent on the resurrection of the body, that would relegate it, at least for all who have died, to a remote future. But at least one word of Christ appears to place it in immediate connection with the experience of death, His word to the penitent thief in answer to the prayer, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom" (Luke xxiii. 43): "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise". The Greek term (*παράδεισος*) is used in the Septuagint to designate "Eden". This lost, it subsequently, in Jewish theology, came to denote that part of Hades, the abode of the dead, where the souls of the righteous await the resurrection. Still later (2 Cor. xii. 4; Rev. ii. 7), it came to denote the abode of the Lord and glorified believers. The words, as spoken to the thief, could only have been understood by him in the second of these senses, but Christ

Himself, who was to open heaven to believers by His death, may well have had before His mind the more glorious significance which the word was now to bear. In any case, it is not a state of unconsciousness, it is not one of virtual, even if temporary, extinction of being. It is a state of conscious blessedness, such as this penitent of the eleventh hour could share with the Lord, through whom he had obtained mercy, and it is entered on at death, "To-day". The attempt to connect *σήμερον* with the words which go before, "considering that it not only violates common sense, but destroys the force of our Lord's promise, is surely something worse than silly" (Alford).

5. As to its perfect form entered on by the resurrection. It is to the future life as consequent on the resurrection that the Saviour's words most frequently point—not, indeed, exclusively or always. Not only His word to the penitent thief, just considered, but His argument with the Sadducees, implies the continued conscious existence of those who have departed out of this life. However difficult it may be for us to conceive of conscious being in the absence of a physical organism, the Saviour's words represent the patriarchs, long ago removed from life, as living. But, as if to carry the thought of the Church forward to the grand consummation, the more numerous declarations respect the blessedness which is consequent on the resurrection and final judgment, or the misery which to the wicked shall then ensue.

### III.—IN REGARD TO THIS RESURRECTION, NOTE :—

1. It is a literal resurrection ; a resurrection of the body, and not simply a spiritual change, as we have seen some would be disposed to make it. It is not only that this is the

proper meaning of the word, but it seems impossible to attach any other sense than this to such words as Christ uses: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John v. 28, 29). The evidence in the passage of the truth asserted is all the more strong if we compare it with the declaration in the twenty-fifth verse of the same chapter: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live". The language here seems descriptive rather of a spiritual change than of a physical; of the quickening of the dead soul, than of the raising of the dead body, and therefore of a change which the Saviour was even then by His teaching beginning to effect, but which He should effect on a still larger scale by the gift of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit. But so far from the latter passage designating only the same spiritual quickening, there is contrast in the terms employed so marked as to make it evident that if something cognate, yet still something more and different, is meant. In verse 25 it is "the dead," in verse 28 "all that are in their graves"; in verse 25 "the hour cometh and now is," in verse 28 "the hour cometh," is coming. In verse 25 the quickening follows from the concurrence of faith with the Divine message "they that hear shall live," it is therefore partial. In verse 28 it is the inevitable result of the Divine action, and therefore universal: "All that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God and live". On the other hand the declaration in verse 25, as preceding that of verse 28, and the Saviour's words to Martha, "I am the

resurrection and the life," indicate a connection between the spiritual quickening and the resurrection at the last day, which is perhaps insufficiently regarded.

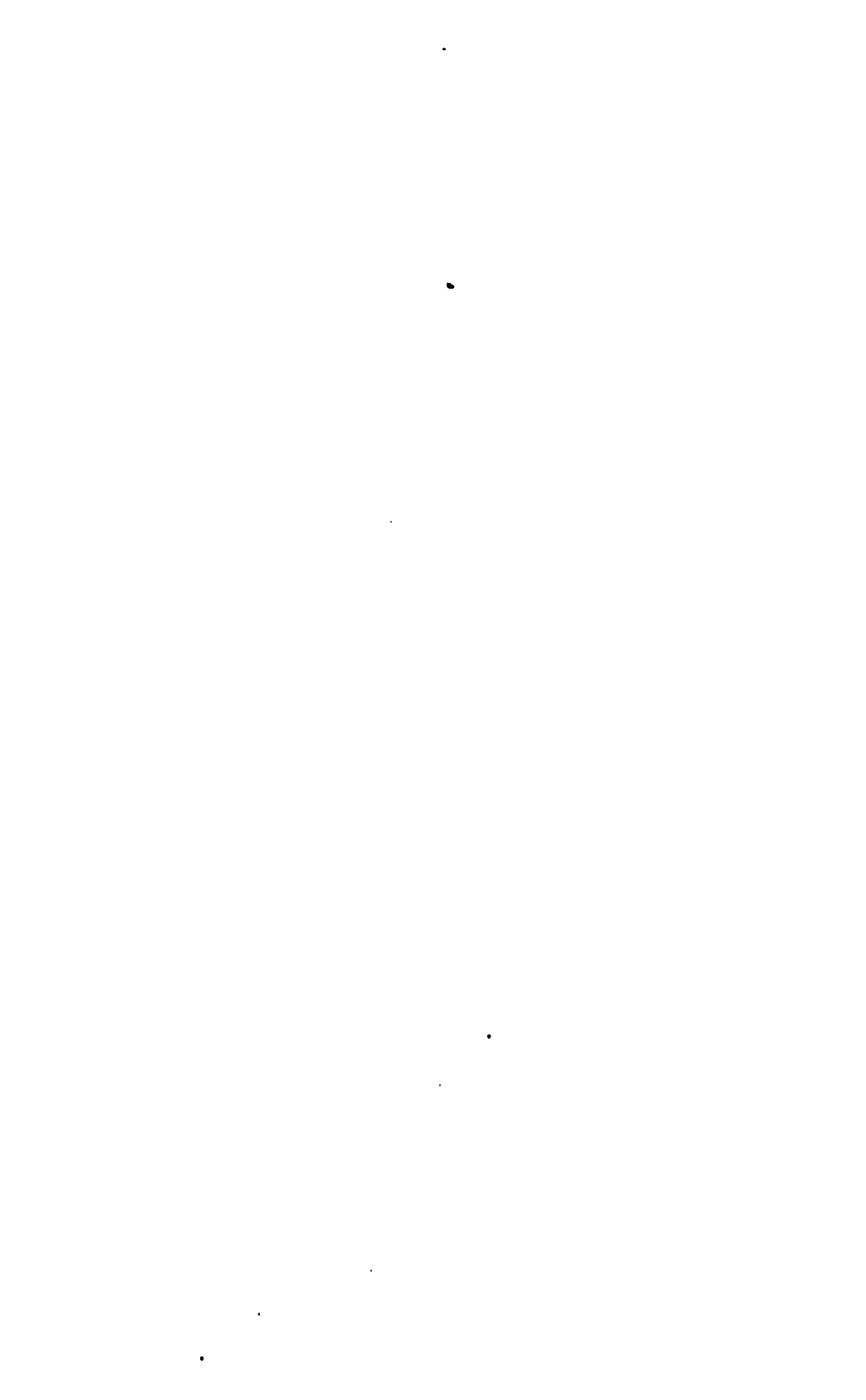
2. While the resurrection is a literal one, that of the body, it is not the body as it was, but changed so as to be conformable to the new conditions. They "neither marry, nor are given in marriage, neither can they die any more, for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection" (Luke xx. 35, 36). The design of marriage is to perpetuate the race, to which otherwise death would soon put an end, until the number of the elect is completed. This end once reached, the institution of marriage, with, as Godet thinks, the removal of the distinction of sex, is to cease. This difference, however, seems to warrant the anticipation of very great changes in the constitution of the resurrection body.

3. It is to include both the righteous and the wicked. The relation in which in some passages it is made to stand to the spiritual quickening of the man, "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John xi. 25), and especially the terms, "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead" (Luke xx. 35), might seem to point to some limitations in regard to the resurrection from the dead; but the Saviour's words, "All that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God," and the description of the judgment scene also, "Before Him shall be gathered all nations" (Matt. xxv. 32), give an undeniable character of universality to the resurrection; one with which the later teaching of Scripture is in full accord.

4. It is the work of Christ, to take place contemporaneously with the second advent. The agency of the Saviour in the



resurrection of the dead is asserted : " I am the resurrection and the life " ( John xi. 25 ), and " For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will " ( John v. 21 ). It is only stated in John vi. 40, 44, 54, that He will raise them up at the last day, but the resurrection is everywhere represented as taking place at the day of judgment, and in connection with that event.







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